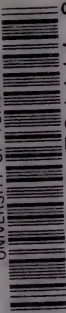


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Set

To the dear Girls
With love from
L. Finney

880.

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THE
LIFE
OF
SHAKSPEARE;

ENQUIRIES

INTO
THE ORIGINALITY OF HIS DRAMATIC PLOTS
AND CHARACTERS;

AND

ESSAYS

ON THE

Ancient Theatres and Theatrical Usages.

BY AUGUSTINE SKOTTOWE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1824.



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LONDON :
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

TO
CHARLES MILLS, Esq.

AS A SINCERE

TESTIMONY OF RESPECT FOR HIS TALENTS AND
LITERARY ATTAINMENTS,

AND OF GRATITUDE FOR HIS FRIENDSHIP,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE, WITH PRIDE AND PLEASURE,

MOST AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED.

April, 1824.

PREFACE.

IN 1753, Mrs. Lennox published a work entitled “*Shakspeare Illustrated*; or, the Novels and Histories on which the Plays of Shakspeare are founded.” The subject was well chosen; for as Johnson, the friend of the authoress, observed with regard to Milton’s great poem, “it must be interesting to find what was first projected, whence the scheme was taken, how it was improved, by what assistance it was executed, and from what stores the materials were collected; whether its founder dug them from the quarries of nature, or demolished other buildings to embellish his own.”

Of the thirty-five plays usually ascribed to Shakspeare, Mrs. Lennox entirely neglected no less than twelve. Of the twenty-three on which she wrote essays, she failed in six instances of

tracing them to their correct sources; and of ten of the rest, she gave imperfect accounts of Shakspeare's materials. Without offering any criticism on her "Illustrations" of the remaining seven plays, it is evident that there is room for another work on the subject.

Our great dramatist almost invariably selected for the plot of his drama an event of history, a romantic tale, or some previous dramatic composition, and imposed upon himself an almost implicit adherence to his authorities, even in cases where great improvement might have been effected with little pains. For the *alterations* which he chose to make, he is not often to be praised: his *additions* to his originals are, however, almost always excellent; and so beautifully has he blended the separate actions, that they appear always to have formed one consistent whole.

The characters of Shakspeare's absolute creation are as many as those which he prepared on previous hints; and, though his serious dramas far outnumber his comedies, his

comic portraits are somewhat more numerous than his tragic. In point of importance, however, the preponderance is greatly on the side of the tragic characters, and the fact is easily accounted for : the materials borrowed were mostly serious fables, or grave historical events ; the personages engaged in their transaction were of a corresponding tone of mind, and the poet was compelled to concede them a prominence on the scene in some degree commensurate with their prominence in the narrative.

Scarcely one of Shakspeare's tragic characters was conceived by himself ; a singular fact, considering that his comic characters, with the exception of about half-a-dozen, were entirely his own. The conclusion is inevitable that the bent of his mind was decidedly comic. Why, with such a disposition, so large a majority of the subjects selected by him were serious, it is in vain to enquire ; but it appears, that he eagerly sought every opportunity which such a selection left him, to indulge his fancy's course. His predilection for the ludicrous required a wider field for

its display than was afforded him in his few comedies ; and, with the mask and sock, he gaily rushed upon the consecrated ground of the tragic muse, engrafting incidents purely comic on subjects the most serious.

The biography of Shakspeare, and the History of the Stage are subjects on which every lover of the poet is desirous of information, and with a view of making these volumes a COMPANION TO SHAKSPEARE, both have been added to the original design of illustrating the dramatist by comparing his plays with the materials used in their construction. These additions will contribute, it is hoped, to the general utility of the book ; and, with the aid of such information as the commonest editions of the poet afford, the general reader will be furnished with all the elucidatory information he can require, and be spared the pain of wading through the commentators' tomes of controversy.

THE
LIFE OF SHAKSPEARE.*

A FAMILY variously named Shaxper, Shakespeare, Shaksper and Shakspeare†, was spread over the woodland part of Warwickshire in the sixteenth century. They were tradesmen and husbandmen, and their property was at least respectable; different depositories of legal writings proving it to have been frequently the subject of judicial controversy and testamentary disposition.

Of that particular branch of the family whence the poet descended, nothing whatever is known beyond his immediate parent‡, John Shakspeare, who was originally a glover§, and, subsequently,

* Note A.

† Note B.

‡ Rowe's account of the family is this: "It appears by the register, and other public writings of Stratford, that the poet's family were of good figure and fashion there, and are mentioned as gentlemen." This is extremely inaccurate.

§ A manuscript of the proceedings of the Bailiff's Court in 1555, which so describes him.

a butcher*, and also a dealer in wool in the town of Stratford.† He filled various municipal offices in the borough; among the records of which his name first appears in 1555, in an account of the proceedings of the bailiff's court. In Michaelmas, 1557, or some time very slightly subsequent‡, he was admitted a member of the corporation. In September, 1561, he was elected one of the chamberlains, and filled that office during two successive years. In 1565 he was invested with an alderman's gown; and in 1568 he attained the supreme honours of the borough, by serving as high-bailiff from Michaelmas in that year to the same festival in the following. Two years afterwards, 1571, he was elected and sworn chief alderman for the ensuing year.§

* Aubrey.

† Rowe.

‡ On Michaelmas day, 1557, John Lewis was the last on the list of burgesses, and there were then four vacancies. The next existing enumeration of burgesses is one dated 1564, in which John Shakspeare stands next but one to Lewis: he, therefore, probably, was elected into one of the vacancies mentioned. On this occasion Malone says, in the text of his *Life of Shakspeare*, "It appears from a paper inserted below, &c." We look below, and are met by, "See Appendix." We look in the Appendix, and search in vain for the promised document. Similar disappointment is occasioned in the two succeeding pages, 76, 77.

§ *Regist. Burg. Strat.* Whatever respectability the corporation of Stratford boasted, their claims to erudition must have been most humble: out of nineteen members of that

The progress of John Shakspeare in municipal distinctions is an implication of respectability which is supported by other considerations. His charities rank him in the second class of the townsmen of Stratford* ; a public document, referring to the year of his magistracy, states him to have been possessed of property to the amount of five hundred pounds † ; so early as 1556 he was the holder of the leases of two houses, one in Greenhill, the other in Henley-street, Stratford, and in 1570 he rented fourteen acres of land, called Ingon, or Ington, meadow. ‡ His prosperity was undiminished in 1574, when he purchased two houses, with a garden and orchard annexed to each, in Henley-street, Stratford.§

body who signed a paper in 1564, only seven could write their names, and among the twelve who set their mark is John Shakspeare ; he is kept in countenance, however, by the then chief magistrate, whose cross is ostentatiously termed “the sign manual of the high bailiff.”

* In a subscription for the relief of the poor in 1564, out of twenty-four persons, twelve gave more, six the same, and six less than John Shakspeare : in a second subscription by fourteen persons, eight gave more, five the same, and one less.

† Grant of arms to John Shakspeare, 1596.

‡ Regist. Burg. Strat. Two indentures in the Roll's chapel.

§ Chirograph of a fine levied to John Shakspeare, by Edmund Hall, and Emma his wife, in 1574. Deed executed by Elizabeth and Thomas Nash in 1639.

While in the exercise of his magisterial office, John Shakspeare obtained from the Herald's College a concession of arms. From some unexplained cause, he made another application for a grant of arms in 1596, with similar success; and, in 1599, procured a confirmation, or exemplification, of the former grants, with permission, in consideration of his marriage with Mary Arden, to impale his own with the arms of that ancient family.* Some property in money, an estate in land, and an exaltation in rank, were the beneficial consequences of this alliance.†

Mary was the youngest daughter of Robert Arden, of Wilmecote in Warwickshire. The Arden family was of great antiquity, and, in the reign of Henry the Seventh, in particular, of some consideration. Sir John Arden, the elder brother of Mrs. Shakspeare's great-grandfather, was squire for the body of that king; her grandfather was groom, or page, of the bedchamber to the same monarch, who rewarded his fidelity by constituting him keeper of the park of Aldercar, and bailiff of the lordship of Codnore.‡

* Note C.

† Robert Arden's will. John Shakspeare's bill of complaint against Lambert.

‡ Grant of arms to John Shakspeare. Fuller's Worthies.

In 1574, John Shakspeare's affairs began to fall into decay. In 1578, he mortgaged the small estate he enjoyed through his wife, for forty pounds*; and his difficulties were so well known to his brothers of the corporation, that they remitted to him, in the same year, the payment of half the sum of six shillings and eight pence levied upon each alderman, and entirely exempted him from a weekly contribution of four pence to the poor.† At the same time, also, he was indebted five pounds to a baker at Stratford, and compelled to obtain collateral securities for its payment.‡ In the following year his name is among the defaulters to a contribution for the purchase of defensive armour and weapons.§ In 1585-6, a distress was issued for the seizure of his goods, which his poverty, however, rendered nugatory, it being returned "Joh'es Shackspere nihil habet unde distr. potest le-

Dugdale's Antiq. Sir John Arden's will, 1526, Prerog. Off. Grants to Robert Arden. An Inquisition made in 1591.

* John Shakspeare's bill of complaint against John Lambert.

† Regist. Burg. Strat.

‡ List of debts appended to Roger Sadler's will. Prerog. Off.

§ Regist. Burg. Strat.

vari.”* He was shortly after dismissed from the corporation for a neglect of attendance at the halls for the seven preceding years†; and, in 1587, subjected to an action for debt.‡ The precise state of his affairs during the ten succeeding years is not known, but it does not seem likely, from his describing himself in 1597 as of “very small wealth and very few friends,” that the sun of prosperity ever again shone upon him§; and a supplication from the bailiff and burgesses of Stratford, in 1590, records the hopeless depression of the once highly prosperous trade of a woolstapler. The town had then “fallen into much decay for want of such trade as heretofore they had by clothing and making of yarn, employing and maintaining a number of poor people by the same, which now live in great penury and misery, by reason they are not set at work as before they have been.”¶

John Shakspeare died in 1601. His family was numerous: Jone, Margaret, William, Gilbert, Jone, Ann, Richard, and Edmund. || The

* Register of the Bailiff's Court.

† Regist. Burg. Strat.

‡ Declaration filed in the Bailiff's Court.

§ Bill of complaint against John Lambert.

¶ Supplication to the Lord Treasurer Burghley.

|| Note D.

first born, Jone, died in earliest infancy, and Margaret when only five months old. William was the poet. Of Gilbert nothing appears after the registry of his baptism*: the register, indeed, mentions the burial of "Gilbert Shakspeare, adolescens," in 1611-12, who might, or might not, have been the son of the elder Gilbert. Jone married William Hart, a hatter in Stratford. She died in 1646, leaving three sons.† She was remembered in her immortal brother's will by a contingent legacy of fifty pounds to her and her children; a bequest of twenty pounds, all his wearing apparel, and the house which she then occupied, at a yearly rent of one shilling, for her life. The Harts have continued in Stratford during the two centuries which have elapsed since the poet's death. In 1794, one of Shakspeare's two houses in Henley-street was the property of Thomas Hart, a butcher, the sixth in descent from Jone. Ann Shakspeare died in infancy.‡ Richard was buried in 1612-13.§ Edmund Shakspeare embraced the calling

* The text states the fact literally; but I have no doubt that Gilbert lived till after the Restoration of Charles II., and was that brother of Shakspeare of whom Oldys reports, that he saw the dramatist perform the character of Adam in *As You Like It*. See Note N.

† Parish Register of Stratford. ‡ Ibid. § Ibid.

of an actor, influenced, probably, in his choice by the connection of his brother with the theatre. He was a player at the Globe, lived in St. Saviour's, and was buried in the church of that parish on the 31st of December, 1607.*

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, in April, 1564†, a fact which comprises the whole of the poet's history till he is found, "for some time," at the free grammar school of his native town‡, where he, doubtless, acquired the Latin, "the small Latin," that his friend Ben Jonson assures us he was master of. The narrowness of his parent's circumstances was an insuperable bar against the progress of his education, and he was summoned home to assist in the occupation of his father§, which, at the period now spoken of, was that of a butcher, if the tradition is to be credited which relates that young Shakspeare killed a calf in "high style," and graced his slaughter by a speech.¶ The same authority assigns also to

* Register of Saint Saviour's parish.

† Parish Register. He was baptized on the 26th, and the day of his birth is said to have been the 23d, but on no sufficient authority

‡ Rowe.

§ Rowe.

¶ Aubrey. A good story is seldom good enough for Aubrey. He adds, "There was at that time another butcher's son in this town, that was held not at all inferior to

his younger years the occupation of a school-master in the country.*

Shakspeare had scarcely attained the age of eighteen, when he married. His wife was Anne, the daughter of Richard Hathaway, a substantial yeoman in the neighbourhood of Stratford.† She was twenty-six years of age, (eight years older than her husband,) who neither bettered his circumstances, nor elevated himself in society by the connection. In the following year, 1583, his daughter Susanna was born; and about eighteen months afterwards his wife bore twins, a son and a daughter, who were baptized by the names of Hamnet and Judith.‡

Shakspeare's marriage was no proof of his worldly prudence, nor was the next great event in his life of a wiser character.

His associates, it is recorded, were dissolute, and some of them made a frequent practice of

him for a natural wit, his acquaintance and coetanean, but died young."

* Aubrey. Note E.

† Rowe says, "the daughter of one Hathaway." The inscription on her tomb-stone, in Stratford church, proves her christian name and her age. "Here lyeth interred the body of Anne, wife of William Shakspeare, who departed this life the 6th August, 1623, being of the age of 67 years." The date of Shakspeare's marriage is only known by reference to the birth of the first child. Note F.

‡ Parish Register.

deer-stealing. Shakspeare was, on one more than one occasion, induced to join them in their incursions on the property of Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote, in the neighbourhood of Stratford. The opinions of the injurer and the injured, in a case of this sort, were not very likely to accord; and it, therefore, excites no surprise that, on detection, Shakspeare imagined himself too harshly treated. In revenge, he affixed a scurrilous ballad to the gate of the owner of the stolen deer.* One stanza of the offensive pasquinade has descended in connection with the story of its author's indiscretion:

“ A parliament member, a justice of peace,
 At home a poor scare-crowe, at London an asse,
 If lowsie is Lucy, as some volke miscalle it,
 Then Lucy is lowsie whatever befall it: -
 He thinks himself greate,
 Yet an asse in his state
 We allowe by his ears but with asses to mate.
 If Lucy is lowsie, as some volke miscalle it,
 Sing lowsie Lucy, whatever befall it.”†

* Rowe.

† Jones of Tarbick, — related by Oldys and Capell. The ballad has, at last, been discovered entire; but unaccompanied by any allusion to the occasion of its composition. The lines in the text are printed as two stanzas in the entire ballad:

“ He thinks himself greate, yet an asse in his state,” forming the first line of the second stanza. Note G.

This aggravation of injury by insult was productive of the very natural consequence of increased severity on the part of Sir Thomas Lucy, and proceedings were urged so far against the youthful offender, as to induce him to fly from the place of his nativity, the seat of his business and the bosom of his family.* The date of his departure is uncertain. It might have been previous to 1585, though his twin children were baptized at Stratford in the February of that year; and it might, with, perhaps, greater probability, be assigned to a subsequent period.

The inhabitants of Stratford were great lovers of theatrical amusements. No less than four-and-twenty visitations were made them by companies of comedians between 1569, when Shakspeare was five years old, and 1587. The names of Burbage and Green occur, both in the London companies of actors and in the lists of the townsmen of Stratford.† From his earliest childhood, therefore, to his advancement into manhood, the attention of Shakspeare was directed to the stage, by frequently recurring attraction, and in all probability, by an acquaintance and association with comedians. When a change of life became unavoidable, it is natural

* Rowe.

† Note H.

to suppose that he yielded to the predilection of his youth. His fugitive steps were directed to London: he there embraced the occupation of a player, and, subsequently, of a writer for the stage. *

Shakspeare's arrival in the metropolis is an era in the history of the theatre, and I shall therefore trace the national drama from its birth, through its slow and sickly growth, to the time of which I am writing. A natural curiosity will be similarly gratified by the collection and arrangement of the scattered and various information we possess relative to the theatres and theatrical usages of Shakspeare's time, for who can be indifferent respecting the circumstances under which his works were first introduced, and exhibited, upon the stage? †

Mysteries, or miracle-plays, were mostly founded on the characters and events of sacred writ, or on the superstitions with which the fair form of religion was surrounded. On the personification of the Deity, of Christ, and the Holy Ghost; and on the representation on the stage of the Incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection, and Ascension, not a syllable need be said; nor is the appearance of Adam and Eve,

* Note I.

Note J.

in one scene, naked and *not ashamed*, and in the next covered with fig leaves, exactly a topic for criticism. The Devil was a particular favourite with the audience; usually displaying horns, a very wide mouth, large eyes and nose, a flame-coloured beard, a cloven foot, and a tail. A nimble personage, called the Vice, was his constant companion, whose wit consisted in jumping on the devil's back, and in the buffoonery of chastising him with a wooden sword, till his satanic majesty bellowed lustily under the infliction. The altercation of Noah and his wife in the Deluge, is a specimen of the treatment of sacred subjects, when converted into mysteries. "Welcome, wife, into this boat," is the polite salutation of the attentive husband on handing his lady into the ark; "Take thou that for thy note," with the dutiful accompaniment of a box on the ear, is the eloquent rejoinder of the mother of the modern world. These productions, wretched and impious as they seem to us, were deemed serviceable to the interests of religion. Festivals and saints' days were selected for their performance; a pardon of one thousand days was awarded by the Pope, and forty additional days by the bishop of the diocese, to all who resorted in Whitsun week to the representation of the series of mysteries at Chester, "beginning

with the Creation and fall of Lucifer, and ending with the general judgment of the world." Monasteries, abbeys, and churches, were the usual places of their exhibition, and, for some time, the clergy themselves the only performers; but, by degrees, many of the parts fell into the hands of the scholars and choir-boys, attached to the monastic establishments, and on them the entire performance ultimately devolved, the clergy being prohibited, by an injunction from the Mexican council, ratified at Rome in 1589, from ever playing in mysteries again. The parish-clerks of London availed themselves of their ability to read, and performed spiritual plays at Skinner's Well, for three days successively, before Richard the Second, his queen, and the nobles of the realm.

The popularity of miracle-plays and mysteries continued through four centuries. Early in 1500 their performance was, however, more occasional than heretofore. The Chester mysteries were revived for the last time in 1574, and the exhibition, in the reign of James the First, of Christ's Passion, on Good Friday, was the final degradation which subjects so solemn experienced on the stage.

The first departure in mysteries from the literal representation of scriptural and legendary

stories, was the introduction of allegorical characters as auxiliary to the main design. Some attention was then bestowed on plot, description of manners, and discrimination of character. Sin, death, faith, hope, charity, and the leading passions or vices of mankind, personified, at length became the principal agents, and dramas so constructed were called moralities, in contradistinction to mysteries. Moralities made their appearance about the middle of the fifteenth century, from which time they divided popularity pretty equally with mysteries, till the improved understanding of the audience drove both from the stage.

Mysteries naturally paved the way for the adoption of historical or romantic tales, as the subject of a drama ; and from moralities, wherein the characters were allegorical, and the plot fanciful, the transition was easy to entertainments of nearer approach to the regular play.

The custom of exhibiting pageants on great public occasions, in honour, and for the recreation, of royalty, powerfully aided the introduction of the drama. Appropriately habited, historical and allegorical characters represented stories in *dumb-show* on temporary moveable stages in the streets. In the reign of Henry the Sixth, dialogue and set speeches in verse were

added. Hence may be deduced those most incongruous productions, masques; hence ideas were derived of the introduction of profane characters on the stage, and the mixture, subsequently met with, of pantomime and dialogue in the same play, and the allegorical representation in *dumb shew* of the matter of the scenes which followed.

It is to the universities, inns of court, and public seminaries, however, that we are indebted for the first regular dramas which our language boasts. The scholars of these establishments assiduously engaged in free translations of the classical models of antiquity, and in the composition and performance of plays constructed on their model. The earliest tragedy, *Gorboduc*, or *Ferrèx and Porrex*, the joint effort of Sackville Lord Buckhurst, and Thomas Norton, was performed at the Inner Temple in 1561-2; and the first comedy, *Gammar Gurton's Needle*, a juvenile production of Bishop Still, was acted at Christ's Church, Cambridge, in 1566.

There is a general similarity between all the plays that preceded Shakspeare's dramatic efforts. Their authors had no notion of a plot comprehending one great design, nor of a plot consisting of several actions emanating from the same source, or combining for the promotion of

the same end, consistent with, though varying from, each other. They either ran into the error of framing their story with such bald simplicity, that it was scarcely worthy the name of story at all, or they placed in the same play two, or more, stories unconnected by one single link. Incidents are either made the subject of long and tedious conference, or they follow each other in such quick succession, that actions and their results, which a lapse of time only could produce, stand in immediate contact, so that the passing scene wears the appearance of arbitrary arrangement, rather than of a natural progress of events. One of two faults generally marks the concluding act. The denouement is delayed, after the result is obvious, and all interest in it has evaporated, or, the main story being finished, the author's ingenuity is put to the rack to eke out his scene to its prescribed extent, with whatever extraneous circumstances he could graft upon it.

The chorus very commonly formed a portion of the earlier English plays, sometimes taking a part in the performance, sometimes supplying the deficiencies of the action by narrative or explanation, and sometimes performing the office of a moral commentator on the passing events. A more incongruous accompaniment was the cumbrous machinery of the *dumb-show* which

preceded the several acts, prefiguring their contents by allegorical and pantomimic exhibition. Into such extensive use was this mute mimicry sometimes stretched, that it was made to cover the want of business in the play; and where an author was extremely fastidious, and attentive to probability, it was used to fill up the interval that was necessary to pass while a hero was expected from the holy land, or a princess imported, married, or brought to bed.

Prose, rhyme, and blank-verse, were indifferently the mental vehicles of the early dramatists: occasionally plays were composed in one or other of them entirely; the mixture of two was very frequent, and instances of the presence of all three in the same play were by no means common.

That our early dramatists were well acquainted with the laws which antiquity prescribed for the regulation of the drama, is a circumstance that admits not of question, for they were all scholars. Their neglect of the unities, therefore, and other proprieties, more essential, and of much easier observance, was wilful, and they had, apparently, no hesitation in committing to paper all the suggestions of their imaginations: hence the occurrences of many years are crowded into five acts; in a single play the scene is often

shifted to different quarters of the globe ; hence the mixture of characters of different countries ; and while the scene is laid in Greece or Rome, the customs, manners, sentiments, and allusions proclaim all the personages to be English. In short, their anachronisms and anomalies are without end.

The leading characteristic of the early English tragedy, in which the ancients were not imitated, was exaggeration. The plot generally embodied some circumstance of extraordinary horror or wickedness, and all its accompaniments were attuned to a turgid and unnatural pitch. Situations such as could scarcely be produced by any possibility were diligently sought after ; passions were overstrained till no distinction remained between what was intended for their expression and the ravings of lunacy ; language was inflated till it lost its connection with sense ; and metaphors the most unlicensed, and conceits of thought and expression the most fanciful, were used with the utmost freedom. It was impossible that the heart could speak from beneath so cumbrous a load of folly and absurdity : attempts were indeed made to imitate the voice of nature, but rarely with such success as to be productive of even a momentary delusion.

We turn to comedy, but meet with no superior

gratification: much greater diversity of scene and incident she certainly exhibits, but she entails even greater evils on her reader than those already enumerated. Low buffoonery, horrible obscenity, petty conceits, quibbles, puns, cross-purposed questions and replies, and, in short, every variety of rhodomontade was produced, and accepted as substitutes for wit. The most prominent characters in the old comedies were waiters, pages, servants, and other personages of the same humble description: the meanness of their rank may be urged as some excuse for their vulgarity.

The union of serious and comic business in the same play was very common from the first dawnings of dramatic literature in England. The Vice and the Devil obtruded their impertinent buffoonery on scenes of the most serious and solemn import, and the audiences, who witnessed such absurdity with delight, may well be supposed incapable of relishing performances of pure and simple beauty. The grossness of their taste was administered to by a clown who thrust himself upon the scene, on all occasions, to vent the ebullitions of his folly or his wit. He was privileged to notice what was passing in the audience part of the theatre, to enter into familiar conversation with the spectators, either between the

acts or in the midst of the business of the scene. But there was a particular expectation that the clown should exhibit his talents at the conclusion of a play in an entertainment called a jig, in which he danced, sung, and chanted metrical nonsense, to the accompaniment of a pipe and tabor.

It would be unjust to associate the name of Marlow with those of Green, Lodge, Peele, Nash, Lily and Kyd, the principal authors during the earliest age of the English drama.

Marlow's first undoubted play was produced in 1590, and he died in 1593. His appearance, therefore, was contemporaneous with that of Shakspeare, from whom he borrowed nothing. His own vigorous understanding taught him to despise, and he had the courage to discard, the puerility and diffusion, and, in a great measure, the low buffoonery and vulgar witticisms also, that disgraced the works of his predecessors. His conceptions were striking and original, his intellect grasped his subject as a whole, and bending every faculty of his mind to the topic immediately before him, he never shrunk from the expression of his boldest thoughts. Sublimity is Marlow's perpetual aim, and to his over strenuous efforts for its attainment, and his indistinct notions of the difference between sublimity and

horror, his most glaring faults are attributable. He heaps crime on crime, and one disgusting incident upon another, till a mass of deformity is accumulated which both nature and probability disclaim. The richest success is often, however, the reward of his noble daring, and his dramas exhibit many scenes both of deep pathos and true sublimity. Marlow's language harmonises exactly with his thoughts. Its characteristics are depth, clearness, and strength, but, partaking of the over-grown boldness of his designs, it is distorted by far-fetched images, forced comparisons, and turgid and bombastic phrases. Marlow's greatest misfortune was want of taste. The arrangement of his scenes is generally bad, the incidents are awkwardly and coarsely introduced, and the whole plot so loosely hung together, that he might literally join with Polonius in asserting, that he used "no art at all."

While the subjects of dramatic entertainments were sacred, and the stage accessory to the views of the priesthood, churches and chapels, and their immediate vicinities, were deemed perfectly appropriate for dramatic exhibition. But as mysteries yielded to profane subjects, and lessons of instruction, in the shape of moralities, gave way to scenes of mere amusement, the profanation of sacred edifices was loudly protested

against, and, by degrees, entirely disused. When scholars and singing boys succeeded the clergy as the principal performers, school-rooms, halls in the universities and inns of court, the mansions of the nobility, and the palaces of royalty, became the theatres of exhibition. To a late period, indeed, of the reign of Elizabeth, the regularly licensed comedians occasionally performed in churches and chapels; but with this exception, and the further one of companies being called upon to afford entertainment to their sovereign, or immediate patron, the scenes of their theatrical glories were temporary erections in the court-yards of inns: the stage occupied one side of the quadrangle; the centre area, and the balconies on the three remaining sides, afforded ample accommodation for the audience.

The first building in England dedicated exclusively to the purposes of the drama, emphatically termed *the theatre*, was erected about 1570 in Blackfriars, near the present Apothecaries' Hall. The number of theatres rapidly increased: a playhouse in Whitefriars, in, or near, Salisbury Court, and another called the Curtain in Shoreditch, were raised previous to 1580; and, subsequently, the Globe, on Bank-side; the Red Bull, at the upper end of St. John's

Street; the Fortune, in Whitecross Street; and the Cockpit or Phoenix, in Drury Lane. There were, besides, other theatres of minor importance; the Swan, the Rose, and the Hope. Each theatre, it is believed, was distinguished by a sign indicative of its name: that on the Globe was a figure of Hercules supporting the globe, underwritten was the motto, *Totus mundus agit histrionem*.* The roof of the Globe, and of the other public theatres, was surmounted by a pole which displayed a flag during the period of performance. The playhouses were never all open at the same time, some of them being summer, others winter theatres. The roofs of summer theatres extended only over the stage, passages, and galleries; the area of the pit was therefore open to the weather: the winter houses were completely covered in, and consequently their performances took place by candle light. Such were the Theatre, the playhouse in Whitefriars and the Cockpit; they were also smaller than the other theatres, and for some reason now unknown, called private theatres. The illumination of the body of the house was effected by cressets, or large open lanterns, and, occasionally, if it be possible to credit the circumstance, wax lights were used: the stage was lighted

* Note K.

by two large branches similar to those that are hung in churches.

The form of the English theatres was derived from those buildings which experience had proved to be well adapted to the purposes of the drama. Like the court-yard of an inn, three sides were occupied by balconies: these, properly divided, were appropriated to the reception of different classes of company: the fourth side formed the stage; and the centre area the pit, which, unlike the same place in modern English theatres, was without benches. The common people, who resorted thither, stood to witness the exhibition, and hence are called *groundlings* by Shakspeare, and, by Ben Jonson, the *understanding* gentlemen of the *ground*. Between this class of spectators, and the occupiers of the upper balconies, or scaffolds, there was no distinction in rank, both being of the lowest and most disreputable description. The lower balconies, or rooms, which answered to our boxes, were frequented by company of rank. The "lords' rooms" are often mentioned by the old dramatists, and appear to have been next the stage.

Independently of the regular rooms, there were, in some of the theatres, private boxes, but their situation is not ascertained with precision. Occasionally, also, the public rooms were appro-

priated to individuals, under the security of a lock and key. An upper balcony, over what is now called the stage box, constituted the orchestra.

The stage was separated from the audience part of the house by palings, and, previous to the commencement of the performance, was concealed by a curtain, which, divided in the middle, could be drawn from the centre to the sides: its materials varied, with the opulence of the theatre, from woollen to silk. Like the floors of private houses in the Elizabethan age, the stage was usually strewed with rushes, but on occasions of extraordinary ceremony, it was covered with matting. At the back of the stage there was a balcony, or upper stage, on which the characters entered who were required to appear in elevated situations, such as Juliet in the balcony; and Romeo and Juliet aloft.* When not in use for the purposes of the scene, the balcony stage was concealed by a curtain. Where a play was exhibited within a play, the balcony was made use of either for the audience before whom the representation was to be made, or as a stage for the performance of the auxiliary play. Shakspeare himself furnishes an instance of each

* Act 3. sc. 5. "Aloft" is the stage direction of the second quarto.

practice. Sly would sit in the balcony to witness the Taming of the Shrew; and the mock play in Hamlet was certainly acted on the upper stage.

The presence of scenery in the booths and temporary erections in inn yards, where the first companies of comedians exhibited, is not to be supposed; and the evidence collected on the subject, for the most part, goes to prove, that the first regular theatres were nearly as destitute of scenic decoration as their beggarly predecessors had been. The absence of so essential an article of theatrical furniture is a proof, above all others, decisive of the excessive poverty of the first dramatic establishments, since the account books of Queen Elizabeth's master of the revels for 1571, and several subsequent years, clearly demonstrate the use of four varieties of scenery in almost every masque or play exhibited at court. 1. Temporary erections on the stage; 2. paintings on canvass stretched on frames; 3. mechanical contrivances; and, 4. furniture and *properties* generally.*

Scarcely a representation took place in the royal presence without the introduction of a "castell" or "battlement." Houses, arbours, prisons, senate-houses, altars, tombs, rocks and caves, devices for hell and hell-mouth, were

* Note L.

in constant requisition. On one occasion a "church" is specified, which appears, by a subsequent item in the account, to have contained a light. Trees, "hollow," and "of holly," appeared in painting or in effigy, and for the representation of a "wilderness" the axe was laid to the root, and the requisite proportion of timber removed in a waggon from the place of its growth to the revel-hall at court. The notice of such rural scenery forms a natural introduction to the mention of an exhibition little to have been expected on the ancient stage; "hunters that made cry after the fox (let loose in the coorte,) with their hounds, hornes, and hallowing in the play of Narcissus, which crye was made of purpose even as the words then in utterance, and the parte then played did requier." The appearance of these *realities* was, however, the exception rather than the rule. Notices elsewhere appear of "hobby horses;" and from the perpetual charges throughout the accounts for lions, dragons, and fish, it is evident that the representation of animals was very common.

The suspension of the sun, in a cloud likewise suspended, must have been skilfully executed indeed, if it did not carry with it the appearance of absurdity; but the sun certainly was exhibited in that way before her majesty,

who, in the masque of Janus, witnessed with delight the descent of “ flakes of yse, hayle stones, and snow-balls,” delicately composed of “ sugar plate, musk, kumfets, corianders prepared, clove cumfets, synnamon cumfets, gïnger cumfets, rose-water, spike-water, &c.” The royal ear and eye were occasionally also recreated with artificial thunder, and its natural precursor, lightning. An instance is afforded, by the description of a chariot in these accounts, of the ponderous and complicated machinery and properties sometimes used in masques. “ A charrott of 14 foote long and 8 foote brode, with a rocke upon it, and a fountayne therein, for Apollo and the Nine Muzes.”

The contrast afforded to the ample equipment of the royal stage by the destitute state of the public theatres is striking. A simple hanging of arras or tapestry was all the ornament the stage could boast, and this, as it became decayed or torn, was clumsily repaired by the display of pictures over the fractured places. A plain curtain hung up in a corner, separated distant regions. A board inscribed with the name of a country or a city, indicated the scene of action, the varieties of which were proclaimed by the removal of one board and the substitution of another : a table with a pen and ink thrust in,

signified that the stage was a counting house ; if these were withdrawn, and two stools put in their places, it was then a tavern. It was not always thought necessary to clear the stage previous to the execution of these inartificial contrivances. The *Dramatis Personæ* frequently remained immoveable during two or three shiftings of boards, stools, and tables, and were thus transferred, without the trouble of removal, to as many different places in succession. An endeavour was, indeed, sometimes made to rectify so striking an incongruity by the use of curtains, called *traverses*, which were suspended across the stage, and being withdrawn, discovered a person in a place distinct from that where the scene had hitherto been laid ; and this constituted a transfer of all the persons present to the new locality.

When the theatres were entirely destitute of scenery, the protruded board indicated that the empty stage was to be considered as a city, a house, a wood, or any other place. When scenes were first introduced, the board was not immediately discontinued, but was used to denote that the painting exhibited to the audience represented such a particular city, wood, or house. It was a long while indeed before the theatres were rich enough to afford a separate

scene for every change of place throughout a play, so that it was frequently the lot of one painting, in the space of a few hours, to represent the metropolis of different countries. Temporary erections on the stage, for the purposes of the scene, were very common. In the last act of *Romeo and Juliet* the interest centres entirely in the descent of the hero into a tomb; and in the historical plays, so much in favour on the early stage, the frequent mention of the walls of towns, attacks upon the gates, the appearance of citizens and others on the battlements, made some representation of the places named absolutely indispensable. A very inartificial erection in the front of the balcony would answer the principal purposes required; firm footing for those who were to appear above, and ingress or egress beneath, by means of a door or gate.

Many old plays require in their representation the use of somewhat complicated machinery. To mention only those of Shakspeare. In the *Tempest*, Ariel enters "like a harpy, claps his wings on the table, and with a quaint device the banquet vanishes." In another scene of the same play Juno "descends." In *Cymbeline*, Jupiter "descends" in thunder and lightning, sitting upon an eagle. The "cauldron *sinks*," and ap-

partitions *rise* at the bidding of the witches in Macbeth. There were of course trap-doors; the subterraneous region to which they led was known by the name of *hell*, in opposition to the ceiling of the stage, which represented the *heavens*. Azure hangings from the roof indicated the presence of day; a more sombre drapery represented the shades of night. A "hell mouth" is enumerated among the articles belonging to the Admiral's company, and mention of the same delectable avenue very frequently occurs in the Revel Account Books.

It is impossible to mark the introduction of scenery on the public stage, or to describe its actual state at any specific period. In the forty years, or more, between the erection of the first playhouse and the death of Shakspeare, considerable advancement, it appears, had been made in scenic decoration. The mention of a few particulars of the properties actually belonging to the Lord Admiral's company in 1598, may probably, however, give rise to ideas that have not been already suggested. After the mention of rocks, tombs, coffins and altars; lions, dragons, dogs and horses, Phæton's chariot, and oh, lamentable fall! a *bedstead*; the articles most indicative of the adoption of scenery, and a gradual improvement in its use, are, "2 stepells,

and 1 chyme of belles, and 1 beacon," "the sittie of Rome," a "raynbowe," and the "cloth of the Sone and Mone." Nor should the trees of "gowlden apelles," and of "Tantelouse" be omitted.

In the representation of masques and regular dramatic pieces at court, the dresses worn by the performers were remarkable for their elegance and splendour. Gold, silver, silk, satin, velvet, and feathers, in every variety of colour and combination, were exhausted in adorning the actors. Nor was splendour the only consideration: considerable pains were bestowed, and expense incurred, in the provision of dresses, attributes, and ornaments, appropriate to the characters represented.

However cramped by poverty, various causes combined to enable the theatres to emulate the bravery of the royal stage. The customary habits of the noble and wealthy were splendid; and their rejected wardrobes found ready sale at the theatre, where a slight diminution of lustre was immaterial, and casual soils were well compensated by cheapness of acquisition. As plays or masques were not frequently acted more than once at court, little necessity existed for the preservation of the dresses which were used; and they, of course, readily found their way into the posses-

sion of the only persons to whom they could be valuable. Like the scenery, the dresses of the theatres would vary, in quality and variety, with the opulence or poverty of their treasuries; but it is certain, that at most of the principal play-houses the apparel was various, appropriate, and elegant. Kings figured in crowns, imperial, plain, or surmounted with a sun; and globes and sceptres graced their hands. Neptune had his garland and his trident, and Mercury his wings. Armour was in common use on the stage. A great quantity of the theatrical wardrobe was of satin, velvet, taffety, and cloth of gold; ornamented with gold and silver lace, or embroidery, probably producing an effect little inferior to what is now witnessed.* Greene introduces a player, in his *Groats worth of Wit*, boasting that his *share* in the stage apparel could not be sold for two hundred pounds.

The theatre being thus furnished for the reception of an audience, the next care of the manager was to announce to the public the entertainment prepared for them. For this purpose he availed himself of the multiplicity of posts, which formerly encumbered the streets of the metropolis; their conspicuousness being extremely favourable to the display of bills of the performance. The

* Inventory of the properties of the Lord Admiral's Company, 1598.

name of the play to be acted was printed without any list of the characters, or of the persons who were to personate them.

The hour of performance varied at different theatres from between one to three o'clock in the afternoon.

The situation of the Globe, and other places of public amusement on the side of the Thames opposite to the city, has made us acquainted with a point of our ancestors' manners. It was the very acme of gentility to be rowed across the river by a pair of oars: the employment of a sculler was carefully shunned by the fine gentleman as plebeian and ignoble. The company found their way to Blackfriars, and the theatres in Middlesex, on foot, on horseback, or in coaches.

No distinction seems to have been made in any of the theatres between the company frequenting the upper galleries or *scaffolds*, and the pit or *yard*. The "groundling" and "gallery-commoner" paid alike for admission to the places which they severally occupied, though that price varied with the rank and reputation of the theatre they went to: at the Blackfriars and the Globe they gave sixpence; at the Fortune twopence, and, at some of the inferior houses, as little as one penny. The best rooms, or boxes, at the Globe, were a shilling; at Black-

friars, apparently, sixpence more, and the price was subsequently raised even as high as half-a-crown. Such were the ordinary terms of admission to the theatres; but on the first night of a new play the prices were doubled, and, occasionally, trebled. Dramatic poets were admitted gratis. Nine or ten pounds was the average, and double that sum a very extraordinary receipt at either the Globe or Blackfriars theatres.*

It was customary in the theatres denominated private, to admit that class of spectators who frequented the boxes, on the stage, where they were accommodated with stools, for which they paid, according to the comparative eligibility of their situation, either sixpence or a shilling. Here the fastidious critic was usually to be met with, the wit ambitious of distinction, and the gallant studious of the display of his apparel, or his person. Either seated, or else reclining on the rushes on the floor, they regaled themselves with the pipes and tobacco which their attendant pages furnished. The felicity of their situations excited envy, or their affectation and impertinence disgust, among the less polished part of

* The Globe was much the largest theatre, but its prices being less, its receipts did not exceed those of the Blackfriars house.

the audience, who frequently vented their spleen in hissing, hooting, and throwing dirt at the intruders on the stage: it was the cue of these gallants to display their high breeding by an entire disregard of the proceedings of the ill-mannered rabble.

Numerous methods were devised to wile away the tedious hour previous to the commencement of the performance: books and cards, nuts and apples, bottled ale and pipes, were placed in requisition by the varying tastes of the motley assemblage. A band, composed of trumpets, cornets, hautboys, lutes, recorders, viols, and organs, attended in the theatre, and by flourishes or *soundings*, at short intervals, announced the near approach of the commencement of the entertainment: the third sounding was the signal for the entrance of "*the Prologue*," invariably dressed in a long black velvet cloak: his humble demeanour, and supplicatory aspect and address, confessed the entire submission of the managers and actors to the public will. Only one dramatic piece was exhibited, but relief and variety were given to the entertainment by the feats of dancers, tumblers, and conjurers, and the introduction of music between the acts. To what further extent the orchestra was made use of is uncertain. Many old plays furnish instances of

“ enter music with a song,” without the preservation of the song itself, and we are left to conjecture whether the songs were characteristic, or popular airs adopted for the occasion. Perhaps the earliest regular vocal character was that of Valerius, in Heywood’s Rape of Lucrece, 1608 : emboldened by success, the author continually augmented the number of the songs. Sir William Davenant appears to have been the first introducer of operatic pieces.

If the magnitude of his preparation was justly indicative of the importance of his occupation, the business of the critic was momentous. In aid of his natural acumen, he armed himself with a table-book, in which he maliciously noted down during the performance, passages for criticism ; not forgetting, at the same time, to preserve such jests and crumbs of wit as would bear retailing in coffee-houses, and at the tables of the great, as appropriate opportunities occurred for their display. It was in vogue among these wits to affect disgust at the performance by significant signs, and indecent indications of contempt :

“ How monstrous and detested is’t to see
 A fellow that has neither art nor brain,
 Sit like an Aristarchus, or stark ass,
 Taking men’s lines, with a tobacco face,
 In snuff, still spitting, using his wry’d looks,

In nature of a vice, to wrest and turn
 The good aspect of those that shall sit near him,
 From what they do behold!"*

They commonly also laughed aloud in the most serious scene of a tragedy, or rose, and quitted the theatre in scorn. The boisterous manifestations of dislike, hisses, howls, whistles, and imitations of the mewling of a cat, were more effectual in the condemnation of a new play, which then, as now, had final sentence passed on it the first time of its performance.

An epilogue was a usual, but not an invariable, appendage to a play. Sometimes, as in several of Shakspeare's dramas, it was spoken by one of the performers, and adapted to the character he had personated. In representations at noblemen's houses, a prayer for the patron of the company, and at the public theatres, for the king and queen, closed the performance. The prayer was sometimes interwoven in the epilogue. The actors paid this ostentatious piece of flattery on their knees before the audience, whose edification was, doubtless, commensurate with the piety that dictated the action.

The transition of the drama from sacred to profane subjects effected a gradual change in the performers of theatrical pieces, as well as in

* Jonson's Every Man Out of his Humour.

the place of performance. As the clergy receded from, the scholars and choir-boys advanced upon, the stage, and under the designation of "children" became, in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, proficient and popular performers. Their establishments were regarded as important, for it is no less true than extraordinary, that the masters of the schools and chapels were not only authorised by patent to educate children as comedians, but empowered to take up, and retain by force, such children as they deemed suitable to their purpose.

The earliest mention of professional players appears to be that of the "City Actors," in the time of Edward the Fourth. Henry the Seventh had a company of players. Henry the Eighth, and his successors, Edward and Mary, granted licences to comedians for the performance of all kinds of stage plays; and during those reigns, and indeed until the time of James, it was a common practice of the nobility to retain a few comedians for their occasional private recreation. The badge and livery of the noblemen whose servants these players were, protected them from the penalties of Elizabeth's act for the suppression of vagrancy in their strollings through the country, and, when theatres were erected in the metropolis, the same signs of noble service were their protection.

Elizabeth patronised the drama very warmly. It was her constant practice, throughout her reign, to summon the children of the public schools and chapels, Paul's, Merchant Taylor's, Westminster, and Windsor, to entertain her with plays at court; and her progresses through the country were always attended by a company of comedians. In 1574 she granted to four of the Earl of Leicester's servants a licence for the performance of every species of dramatic entertainment throughout England; and, in 1583, twelve of the principal actors were selected from the companies of various noblemen, and sworn her Majesty's servants, with an allowance of wages and liveries as grooms of the chamber: eight of them had an annual stipend of 3*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* each.

The influence of the drama over the opinions and feelings of society was early discovered, and its importance acknowledged by the attention of government to its progress. As early as the reign of Henry VIII. there were legislative enactments upon the subject, royal proclamations, and orders of privy council were frequently promulgated, for the restraint of the licentiousness of the players, the interdiction of blasphemy on the stage, and the prohibition of performances at the public theatres on Sundays, in the season of Lent, and in times of common plague.

From the first entertainment of royal companies by English sovereigns, the actors were subject to the authority of the Lord Chamberlain, as general superintendent of the recreations of the court. Henry VIII., however, gave a predominant importance to masques, music, plays, and pageants, by the appointment of a special officer, called the Master of the Revels, for their superintendence. Elizabeth, ever anticipating danger, extended his jurisdiction; and in granting a licence to Burbage and others, in 1574, for the exhibition of plays of every sort, they "being before seen and allowed by the Master of the Revels," she placed an effectual check on the bad purposes to which theatrical entertainments are convertible. Blasphemous and indecent words were erased, and doctrines, political or religious, inimical to the views or faith of the court, were altered or omitted by his directions: his command suspended the performance, or closed the doors of the theatres; and both actors and authors were amenable to his authority, for offences individually or collectively committed.

When Elizabeth granted her licence to Burbage, no idea appears to have been entertained of theatrical representations being incompatible with the duties of religion, restriction only being

placed on performances during "the hours of prayer." Only four years afterwards the privy council forbad the acting of plays in Lent, and subsequently, on Sundays. It will not create surprise that little attention was paid to these mandates, and that successive endeavours were, in vain, made for their enforcement, when it is found that masques and plays were constantly exhibited in the courts, and in the presence of Elizabeth and James, on Sundays, and days of religious festivity. The virtue of the Master of the Revels relaxed on the payment of a stipulated fee, and performances in Lent were only deemed profane when not exhibited under the protection of his special licence.

Though they were associated under the authority of royalty itself, and extensively patronised by the nobility, the theatrical companies of the sixteenth century laboured under difficulties which are now only to be met with amidst the poverty of the meanest strollers. Between the number of characters to be represented, and the corps of actors, a lamentable disproportion often existed, and the Protean qualities of the buskined hero were not uncommonly tasked by the assumption of two, and sometimes even three characters in the same play. Masques were oc-

casionally resorted to for the concealment of such incongruities, as well as of an equally inherent defect in the constitution of the old theatrical companies, the 'entire absence of female performers; no woman appearing on the stage till after the restoration.

The actors on the old stage were divided into two classes, *sharers* and *hirelings*. The *shareer* was remunerated by a proportion of the profits of the theatre, and an allowance of four, five, or six shillings a week was given to his boy who played either juvenile or female characters. The *hireling* was engaged at a weekly salary, and his services sometimes secured, by special articles of agreement, to a particular theatre for two or three years. His stipend was naturally proportioned to his abilities: one notice occurs of the engagement of an actor at five shillings a week for one year, and six shillings and eightpence for the second.

And here I shall resume the biography of Shakspeare. It is improbable that he ever obtained more than six shillings and eightpence a week for his services on the stage. He was at first engaged in a very mean capacity, and was so little distinguished afterwards for any extraordinary excellence as an actor, that the Ghost in his own Hamlet was considered his most suc-

cessful effort.* It was usual in old plays to mention the names of the actors, but not to distinguish the character which each player performed. The name of Shakspeare frequently occurs, but it is only further known that he was the representative of Adam in *As You Like It*.† In the theory of the art of acting, Shakspeare was, however, perfectly skilled. The directions of *Hamlet* to the players are a keen censure upon the boisterous rant, and impertinent ignorance of his contemporaries, and an admirable epitome of general principles for the guidance of the actor. But deficient in those peculiarities of nature that are necessary to the formation of a first-rate performer, it was in vain that Shakspeare entertained the highest ideas of the perfection of which scenic personification is capable. His name was, to all appearance, on the point of sinking to oblivion, but a spirit burnt within him which not the chilling influence of poverty could repress, nor the degradation of his situation long obscure, and the actor of mediocrity aspired to distinction as a writer for the stage.

Among the dramas produced antedecently to 1590, there were many felicitous ideas, both of circumstance and passion which the half-

* Rowe, Note M.

† Oldys, Note N.

formed tastes, of their authors had imperfectly described. But as the love of theatricals became general, and the principles of dramatic composition better understood, the adaptation of the early plays to the more modern stage was a common practice. Encouraged by an easy acquisition of pecuniary reward, for no comparison existed between the task of revisal and the labour of original composition, authors of the highest talents did not disdain the employment. Decker, Rowley, Hayward, Jonson, and others, were frequently thus engaged in conferring value on the works of others, and to this ungrateful task the first efforts of Shakspeare were modestly confined. The second and third parts of Henry VI., (with the first part, Shakspeare had undoubtedly little, if any thing to do,) are vast improvements upon preceding dramatic productions by no means destitute of merit, and their success was such as to embolden the bard to risk a higher flight.

The utmost efforts of industry, seconded by a prudence too seldom found among the votaries of the Muses, were barely adequate to the supply of nature's simplest wants. The price paid by the managers for a new play was twenty nobles, or 6*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*, for which consideration

the author surrendered all property whatever in the piece. If, as was sometimes the case, the play was not absolutely purchased by the theatre, the poet looked for remuneration from the profits of a third night's representation, the precarious produce of the sale of his play, when published, at sixpence a copy, and the hard-earned fee of forty shillings for an adulatory dedication to a patron. The sums given for the alteration of old plays varied extremely, and were, doubtless, regulated by the quantity of new matter furnished, and the success attendant upon the révilal: as little as ten shillings was sometimes paid, and the highest remuneration was short of what was given for a new play. Dramatic writers were, therefore, generally poor: they were bound to theatrical managers either by favours past, existing debts, or the perpetual dread of one day needing their assistance. Their wants often compelled them to solicit, nay, their very existence appears sometimes to have depended on, advances on the embryo productions of their brains, and the labours of to-day were devoted to cancel the obligation which the necessities of yesterday had contracted. It is truly pitiable to find the great Ben Jonson soliciting from Henslowe, the advance of a sum so paltry as "five shillings."

In 1592 Shakspeare was well known as a writer for the stage, but no point of the poet's history is involved in greater obscurity than the time of his commencing original dramatic author, and every attempt to connect with certainty so interesting a circumstance with any one of his numerous dramas has ended in disappointment. The Two Gentlemen of Verona and the Comedy of Errors have been pointed out, but others might, with equal propriety, have been selected.

The combination of the profession of a dramatic writer with the occupation of a player must have lightened the pecuniary difficulties of Shakspeare, but could afford him little prospect of emerging from the poverty in which almost every writer for the stage was then involved. But if he reaped no great pecuniary advantage from his labours as an actor and author, yet in his latter character he advanced in worldly consideration. The actors, in his day, were both denominated and regarded as *servants*, and when the comedian's duty summoned him to attendance at the mansion of his noble patron, the *buttery* was the place to which he was admitted. But the society of dramatic writers was courted by the opulent; the nobility adopted them as acquaintances, and made them at once the objects of their bounty and esteem. And thus it happened to Shakspeare and the ac-

complished Lord Southampton. Sir Thomas Heminge, his Lordship's father-in-law, was treasurer of the chambers to the Queen, and the rewarding of the actors at the court was part of his office. The theatre and actors, therefore, were almost necessarily forced upon the attention of the young nobleman, and the effect of the early impression is sufficiently marked at still later periods of Lord Southampton's life by his neglect of the court for a *daily* attendance at the theatre; his entertainment of Cecil with "plaies"; and his causing the tragedy of Richard the Second to be acted, for the double purpose of sedition and of amusement, on the night previous to Essex's rebellion.* At the theatre, then, commenced that connection between himself and Shakspeare which is first intimated by the poet's dedication to his Lordship of the poem of Venus and Adonis, in 1593, when Lord Southampton was just twenty years of age. Their mutual satisfaction was testified, and their growing friendship cemented, by Shakspeare's repetition of the compliment on the publication of the Rape of Lucrece in 1594.

It is reported of Lord Southampton that he at one time gave to Shakspeare a thousand pounds to

* Letter from Sir Rowland Whyte to Sir Robert Sidney in the Sidney papers, and Lord Bacon's works.

enable him to complete a purchase*; and the assertion is strongly corroborated by the opulence in which Shakspeare is found a very few years after his arrival in London, — an opulence far too considerable to have accrued from his emoluments of actor and writer for the stage. Some of his plays could only have entitled him to the smaller recompence paid for the alteration of an old drama. His original pieces were sold absolutely to the theatre: the gain upon them, therefore, is ascertainable with tolerable precision, as he neither derived advantage from their publication nor from their dedication to the opulent.†

In 1597, Shakspeare bought New Place, one of the best houses in his native town, which he repaired and adorned. In the following year, apparently as a man of known property, he was applied to by a brother townsman for the loan of thirty pounds‡; and, about the same time, he expressed himself as not unwilling to advance, on adequate security, money for the use of the town of Stratford. || The poet's still increasing

* Rowe, on the authority of Davenant.

† Fourteen plays of Shakspeare were printed during his lifetime, but without advantage to him, as they were surreptitious publications, alike fraudulent on him, on the managers of the Globe, and on the public.

‡ Letter from Richard Quynay to Shakspeare.

|| Two letters from Abm. Sturley of Stratford.

wealth is marked by a continuation of his purchases. In 1602, he gave 320*l.* for 107 acres of land, which he connected with his former property in New Place. In 1605, he bought, for 440*l.*, the lease of a moiety of the great and small tithes of Stratford *; and, in 1613, a house in Blackfriars for 140*l.* A singularity attendant upon this purchase is, that only 80*l.* of the money were paid down, the remainder being left as a mortgage upon the premises. †

The Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery vied with Lord Southampton in patronizing Shakspeare †; and he was also distinguished by the notice of two successive sovereigns, in a manner not less flattering than unusual.

The delicacy of even a “virgin queen” was not shocked by the grossness of that keen-witted voluptuary, Falstaff; and so thoroughly did Elizabeth relish the humour of the two parts of Henry the Fourth, that she commanded the appearance of Falstaff under the influence of love. To this incident in the poet’s life the world is indebted for the Merry Wives of Windsor; a play, it is said, written in the short space of a fort-

* Wheeler’s Guide to Stratford.

† Mortgage-deed executed by Shakspeare, and conveyance from Henry Walker.

‡ Dedication to the first folio.

night.* The extension of the poet's fame was a necessary consequence of the public approbation of his sovereign, and this, in all probability, was the greatest benefit which resulted to him from her patronage. Of the "many gracious marks of her favour," which Rowe makes no doubt Elizabeth conferred on Shakspeare, no vestige remains in the shape of reward more substantial than praise, on which to found a belief that the case of our poet formed an exemption to the almost invariable parsimony which characterized Elizabeth's conduct to literary men †; though the dramatist was no niggard of

* Rowe and Gildon.

† Elizabeth's treatment of Richard Robinson, the translator of the Gesta, who solicited a recompence for the Harmony of King David's Harp, which he dedicated to her by *permission*, may be quoted in illustration. "Your Majesty thanked me for my good-will; your Highness was glad you had a subject could do so well, and that I deserved commendations. But for any gratification for any such labour, your Majesty was not in mynde to bestow any such relief upon me, for your Highness had care of the chargeable voyage to come, of relieving your needy soldiers and requiting of their pains. Finally, your Highness set me not on work, and therefore you were not to pay me my wages." British Bibliographer, vol. i. p. iii. If the reader possesses any curiosity to see instances of the gross flattery used to Elizabeth, he may consult the same work and volume, p. 333.

his flattery, the most grateful incense that could be offered at the shrine of her prodigious vanity.

The drama found in James a sincere and useful patron. In 1599 he received some English comedians under his protection in Edinburgh, and scarcely was he seated on the English throne, when he effected a complete revolution in theatrical affairs. An act of parliament of the first year of his reign *, deprived the nobility of the power of licensing comedians, and their several meagre companies then became concentrated in three regular establishments, under the patronage of the royal family. Prince Henry was the patron of Lord Nottingham's company, which played at the Curtain; the servants of the Earl of Worcester, who occupied the Red Bull, were transferred to the Queen, and subsequently distinguished by the designation of Children of the Revels: the King appropriated to himself the company of the Lord Chamberlain. His Majesty's licence † to Laurence Fletcher, William Shakspeare, Richard Burbage, and others, constituting them his servants, confirmed them in the possession of their usual house, the Globe, and authorised their exhibition of every variety of dramatic entertain-

* Chap. VII.

† Dated May 19, 1603.

ment, in all suitable places throughout his dominions. The Globe, it appears from this document, was the general theatre of the Lord Chamberlain's company; but they had long enjoyed a sort of copartnership in the playhouse in Blackfriars, with "the Children," and subsequently became the purchasers of that house. At one or other of these theatres all Shakspeare's dramas were produced, the Globe being the summer, the Blackfriars the winter, theatre of the company to which he attached himself. Like the other servants of the household, the performers enrolled in the King's company were sworn into office, and each was allowed four yards of bastard scarlet cloth for a cloak, and a quarter of a yard of velvet for the cape, every second year.

With occasional variation in the number of companies, with the rise of one establishment, and the decline of another, circumstances of little influence on the general complexion of theatrical affairs, the theatre continued pretty much on the footing on which it was placed by James, till it was buried by fanaticism amidst the ruins of monarchy and civil order. From gratitude for the honour conferred upon the company, or in compliance with the prevailing fashion of the time, Shakspeare paid his court in flattery to

a monarch fully susceptible of its blandishments. Contrary to all historical authority, Banquo, the ancestor of James, is represented noble in mind, and guiltless of participation in the murder of his sovereign. The delicacy of the compliment, and the skill of its execution, well merited the reward it is said to have earned, — a letter from the monarch penned with his own hand. * The delight afforded by Shakspeare to both his sovereigns, was a fact familiar to his contemporaries.

“ Sweet swan of Avon, what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear :
And mark those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza and our James.” †

Though Elizabeth and her successor were admirers of Shakspeare, and of theatrical amusements generally, neither of them apparently ever visited the public theatres, but gratified their tastes by directing the attendance of the comedians at court. These performances before royalty usually took place at night, an arrangement which did not interfere with the other engagements of the actors. The customary fee for an exhibition in London was 6*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*, and

* Davenant possessed the letter, and related the circumstance to Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham. Oldys.

† Ben Jonson.

royal bounty graciously added an additional 3*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* When, however, the company attended at any palace in the vicinity of the metropolis, and consequently lost the morning performance at their own theatre, the remuneration was doubled.

At the end of a few years Shakspeare obtained a commanding voice in the management of the theatre. As a *sharer* he no longer received the recompence, merely, of an actor or author for services performed, but participated, additionally, in the profits of the company. What annual income he derived from that source it is impossible to estimate with any pretensions to precision. It is alike unknown how many shares the property of the theatre was divided into, and how many shares Shakspeare was possessed of. Supposing him, however, and the supposition is more than sufficiently diffident, to have stood on a footing with Heminges, who is associated with him in James's licence, we have the authority of his partner for asserting, that "a good yearly profit"* accrued to him from the concern, and his interest in it was as perfectly at his disposal by sale, gift, or bequest, as any thing else in his possession. It was in consequence, probably, of his elevation that Shakspeare ceased about

* Heminges' will.

this time to make his appearance as an actor, a profession which he followed without eminent success, and, apparently, with considerable disgust.* In the list of the performers of Jonson's *Sejanus*, produced in 1603, the name of Shakspeare occurs for the last time as a comedian; and henceforth he may be supposed to have given his undivided attention to the management of the theatre, and the cultivation of dramatic literature, till he retired from the cares of active life.

Including those plays which he either re-wrote, or so materially modified as to stamp them as his own, Shakspeare was the undoubted author of thirty-four dramas between the period of his departure from, and final return to, Stratford. Of the order in which they made their appearance little that is decisive is known; and the most ardent investigator of the subject, after a laborious search for contemporary notices of, and allusions to, Shakspeare's dramas, and for indications of time in his works themselves, has not ventured to designate the result of his labours by any other title than "*An attempt to ascertain the order in which the plays of Shakspeare were written,*" and modestly concludes, that it is *probable* they were composed "nearly

* Sonnets 110, 111.

in the following succession; which, though it cannot at this day be ascertained to be their true order, may yet be considered as approaching nearer to it than any which has been observed in the various editions of his works.”

1	Second Part of Henry VI.	-	1591
2	Third Part of Henry VI.	-	—
3	Two Gentlemen of Verona	-	—
4	Comedy of Errors	- -	1592
5	King Richard II.	- -	1593
6	King Richard III.	- -	—
7	Love's Labours' Lost	- -	1594
8	Merchant of Venice	- -	—
9	Midsummer Night's Dream	-	—
10	Taming of the Shrew	- -	1596
11	Romeo and Juliet	- -	—
12	King John	- - -	—
13	First Part of King Henry IV.	-	1597
14	Second Part of King Henry IV.		1599
15	As You Like It	- -	—
16	King Henry V.	- -	—
17	Much Ado about Nothing	-	1600
18	Hamlet	- - -	1600
19	Merry Wives of Windsor	-	1601
20	Troilus and Cressida	- -	1602
21	Measure for Measure	- -	1603
22	Henry VIII.	- - -	—
23	Othello	- - -	1604
24	Lear	- - -	1605
25	All's Well that Ends Well	-	1606
26	Macbeth	- -	—
27	Julius Cæsar	- - -	1607
28	Twelfth Night	- -	—
29	Antony and Cleopatra	-	1608

30	Cymbeline	-	-	-	1609
31	Coriolanus	-	-	-	1610
32	Timon of Athens	-	-	-	—
33	Winter's Tale	-	-	-	1611
34	Tempest	-	-	-	—

Some positions of this chronology rest on distinct and positive testimony, many are just deductions from certain premises, but others are the result of conjectures so refined, on allusions so obscure and dubious, as to mock the name of evidence.

Malone's arrangement was succeeded by the belief that the order of Shakspeare's plays exhibited the gradual expansion of their author's mind. But how stands the fact? In Shakspeare's long career of authorship, the brightest period is indisputably that which commences with the composition of Hamlet in 1600, and closes with Macbeth in 1606:—it was between those years that Lear and Othello were produced. Before the composition of Hamlet are found Richard II. and III., the Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet, King John, a Midsummer Night's Dream, the two parts of Henry IV. and Henry V., As You Like It, and Much Ado about Nothing. And what is the merit of Shakspeare's compositions, subsequently to the Macbeth, which transcends the excellence of these? The claims of Julius Cæsar, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus,

which come under the last division, may be met by the two Richards and Henry V. : King John, an early play, is equal to Timon ; the Two Gentlemen of Verona is a drama scarcely inferior to Cymbeline ; and the Merchant of Venice of more merit than the Winter's Tale. Twelfth Night, written in 1607, is indeed a comedy of the highest excellence ; but is *Much Ado about Nothing* lower in the rubrick ? Nor is the *Tempest*, the last of Shakspeare's compositions, and admirable in its kind, without a rival in a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is among the earliest productions of his muse. The merits of *Romeo and Juliet*, the two parts of *Henry IV.*, and the *Taming of the Shrew*, all early plays, still remain to be urged, and they surely throw a weight into the scale more than sufficient to counterbalance any exceptions that can be taken against the justice of the comparisons already made.

Many of the subjects of Shakspeare's dramas are foreign, and hence, and from the frequent knowledge he displays of classic history, mythology, and poetry, an idea has been indulged that his knowledge of languages was extensive. Ben Jonson, however, laments that his friend was master of "small Latin and less Greek." He acquired his Latin at the school at Stratford ; for

that language was taught in all the grammatical institutions in England: with the source of his Greek we are not acquainted. Before the conclusion of the reign of Elizabeth, the most important works of the poets, historians, and philosophers of Greece and Rome were accessible to English readers; and though rude and uncritical, yet the early translations were sufficiently accurate for purposes of general information. Of these Shakspeare was an inquisitive and diligent reader, and hence he acquired that knowledge which has been sometimes hastily received as a proof of his classical attainments. With the languages of continental Europe his acquaintance did not perhaps extend beyond the French. His play of Henry V. proves his knowledge of that language, and all the tales whereon he grounded his plots existed either in French or English. Many of them were of Italian origin, and Italian literature was in high favour in his time; but as Shakspeare might have become acquainted with them through a French or English translation, we cannot absolutely infer his knowledge of the originals.

It happened to Shakspeare, as to many other eminent characters, to have works assigned to him of which he was not the author: these it is necessary to mention, though not to dwell

upon. It will be seen from the essay on Henry VI. why the play denominated the "first" of the three parts is omitted in the preceding list, though printed in the first folio. Titus Andronicus is also included in that collection, but the internal evidence of its spuriousness would outweigh the testimony of fifty Heminges and Condells in its favour, and the same remark would have been extended to Locrine, The London Prodigal, The Puritan, Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cromwell, and the Yorkshire Tragedy, had they appeared in the first folio instead of the third, a book of no authority whatever. The first editors of Shakspeare denied Pericles a place among his works, though it is now usually printed with his undisputed productions. The honour of this association has not been granted from any conviction of the authenticity of the play, but in complaisance to some trifling amendments made in it by Shakspeare. His hand is visible in a few scenes of Pericles, but only in particular passages of the dialogue, not in the construction of the plot or the formation of the characters. Other dramas have been attributed to Shakspeare, but all on insufficient grounds. Besides his plays, he was indisputably the author of the poems of Venus and Adonis, the Rape of

Lucrece, the Passionate Pilgrim, the Lover's Complaint, and 154 Sonnets.

The early-formed wish of the bard to pass the evening of his days on the spot of his nativity is intimated by his purchase of New Place in 1597. In the garden of that mansion he planted, with his own hand, a mulberry-tree which long flourished under the fame of such an honourable distinction*; and thither in 1613, or the following year, he withdrew for the repose, and the calm enjoyments of a country life.† We learn from Aubrey that it was Shakspeare's practice to visit Stratford once a year; but up to 1596 the place of his residence in London is not known. He then lived near the Bear-Garden in Southwark; and it is on presumptive

* The authority for the story of the mulberry-tree is that of Mr. Hugh Taylor, an alderman of Warwick, who was eighty-five years old at the end of the last century, and had lived, when a boy, at the next house to New Place. His family had resided there for three hundred years, and it was a tradition among them that the tree in question was planted by Shakspeare's hand. Note M.

† The period of Shakspeare's retirement is not exactly ascertained: Rowe's account runs, "he spent some years before his death at his native Stratford;" but the discovery of the mortgage on his house in Blackfriars proves that he was in London in March, 1612-13, and, consequently, makes it doubtful whether he ceased to be a resident in the metropolis as early as had been supposed.

evidence alone, that he is said to have continued in the same abode till he finally retired to the country.*

Shakspeare's associates were such as his connection with the theatre, and his literary pursuits led him into intimacy with. His *fellows*, Heminges, Burbage, and Condell, enjoyed a large portion of his affection.† Augustine Phillips, whose name is included in King James's licence, marked his respect for the bard by a bequest of a thirty shilling piece of gold.‡ With Fletcher, the literary associate of Beaumont, he was on terms of such friendly intimacy, that it has not been thought unreasonable to represent them as jointly concerned in the composition of the *Two Noble Kinsmen*. Though there is no proof of his having assisted Ben Jonson in the production of *Sejanus*, no doubt exists of the intimacy and friendship that subsisted between them. On the death of Shakspeare; Jonson composed an elegy

* What is advanced here rests on the authority of Malone, who asserted in 1796 (*Inquiry*, p. 213-14) that he was in possession of two documents establishing the above facts, and which he intended to adduce in his *Life of Shakspeare*. He lived till 1812, but never finished his work. In 1821 all that Malone had written on the subject was published by Boswell, with a large addition of illustrative papers, but without the documents in question.

† Shakspeare's will.

‡ Phillips's will.

on his friend ; he inscribed his resemblance with his praise, and wrote (there is good ground for the belief,) the preface to the first edition of his works. Nor did time diminish his regard, or efface the remembrance of his companion from his mind. Many years afterwards, he, with warmth, exclaimed, “ I loved the man, and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any.” Yet with these and other literary associates, in an age of free and generous expression of friendship, it is a remarkable fact, that, with one exception, Shakspeare has not left a commendatory line on any contemporary author or publication. He joined Jonson in some verses printed at the end of a little volume of poems by Robert Chester.*

Shakspeare retired into the country at an age little past the prime of life. No hint is any where to be met with of the failure of his constitution, and the execution, in “ perfect health and memory,” of his will, on the 25th of March, 1616, raises no expectation of his speedy dissolution. He had then, however, reached the last stage of his existence. He died on the 23d of April, the anniversary of his birth, having exactly completed his fifty-second year.

* A remark of the last editor of Jonson.

On the 25th of April his body was consigned to its native earth under the north side of the chancel of the great church at Stratford. A flat stone, covering all that is mortal of the remains of Shakspeare, conveys his benediction to the respecer, and his curse to the violator, of the peace of the grave :

“ Good frend, for Jesus sake forbear
 To digg the dust enclosed here ;
 Blese be the man that spares these stones,
 And curst be he that moves my bones.”

Within seven years a monument, executed with no mean skill by an unknown artist, was erected to his memory.* He is represented under an arch in a sitting posture ; a cushion is spread before him, with a pen in his right hand, and his left resting on a scroll of paper. Immediately under the cushion is engraved the Latin distich,

“ *Judicio Pylum, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,
 Terra tegit, populus mœret, Olympus habet ;*”

and, on a tablet underneath,

“ Stay, passenger, why dost thou go so fast,
 Read, if thou canst, whom envious death hath plac’d

* Leonard Digges published some encomiastic verses on Shakspeare before the expiration of seven years from the poet’s death, in which he speaks familiarly of the “ Stratford Monument.”

Within this monument ; Shakspeare, with whom
 Quick nature dy'd ; whose name doth deck the tomb
 Far more than cost ; since all that he hath writ
 Leaves living art but page to serve his wit."

Of the family of Shakspeare something remains to be said. His wife survived him seven years, and died on the 6th of August, 1623, being sixty-seven years of age.* I fear that the marriage of the poet was not productive of that long continued bliss which he anticipated. His wife did not reside with him in London ; their children were born within the first few years of their marriage ; and in his will Shakspeare speaks of her with the cold and brief notice, "I give unto my wife my second-best bed, with the furniture."†

In connection with these circumstances I may mention the story of Shakspeare's gallantry at Oxford, which has been transmitted to us by authority as respectable as any that can be quoted for the traditionary part of the poet's history. In his journeys to and from Stratford and London, the dramatist often baited at the Crown Inn, in Oxford. Mine hostess was beautiful and witty ; her husband a grave and discreet citizen, of a melancholy disposition, but a lover of plays

* Mrs. Shakspeare's tomb-stone in Stratford church.

† Note P.

and play-makers, especially of Shakspeare.* The frequent visits of the bard, and the charms of the landlady, gave birth to the surmises which the succeeding anecdote embodies. Young William Davenant, afterwards Sir William, was then a little school-boy in the town, of about seven or eight years old, and so fond also of Shakspeare, that whenever he heard of his arrival, he would fly from school to see him. One day an old townsman observing the boy running homeward almost out of breath, asked him whither he was posting in that heat and hurry. He answered, "to see his *god*-father Shakspeare." "There's a good boy," said the other, "but have a care you don't take *God's* name in vain."†

The sonnets of Shakspeare proclaim it to have been the misfortune of their author to love where "loving he was much forsworn."‡ Scarcely less pains are taken to proclaim the worthlessness than the beauty of his enchantress; he

"Swore her fair, and thought her bright,

"While she was black as hell, and dark as night."§

The affair is worth pursuing to its sequel. With a perversity common in the history of love, the lady slighted the poet, and fixed her affec-

* Athenæ Oxon.

† Oldys, on the authority of Pope, who quoted Betterton.

‡ Sonnets 142. 151, 152.

§ Sonnet 147.

tions on a youth of singular beauty, the dear and intimate companion of Shakspeare himself. The participation of the young man in this outrage on love and friendship, is somewhat doubtful, as appears from many passages *, and particularly from the hundred and forty-fourth sonnet, which pretty nearly epitomizes the whole of the hapless tale.

“ Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
 Which like two spirits do suggest me still ;
 The better angel is a man right fair,
 The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.
 To win me soon to hell, my female evil
 Tempteth my better angel from my side,
 And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
 Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
 And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend,
 Suspect I may, yet not directly tell ;
 And being both from me, both to each friend,
 I guess one angel in another's hell :
 Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
 Till my bad angel fire my good one out.”

A breach nevertheless ensued between the bard and his better angel. But the pangs of alienation were intolerable, and, in defiance of suspicion and perplexity, Shakspeare received his friend to his bosom, with an attachment,

* Sonnets 40. 42. 132—4. 137—145.

apparently strengthened by its temporary abruption.*

But to resume our account of the family of the bard. Hamnet, his only son, died in 1596, when he was twelve years old. †

Judith, the twin child with Hamnet, was married in February, 1615-16, the year of her father's death, to Thomas Queeny, a vintner in Stratford. Their children were Shakspeare, who died an infant, and Richard and Thomas, both buried in 1638-9; the former in the twenty-first, the latter in the nineteenth year of his age, without leaving any issue. Their mother, Judith, survived till February 1661-2, when she had attained the advanced age of seventy-seven. ‡

The legacies of the dramatist to this, his youngest, daughter, are extremely inconsiderable. One hundred pounds in discharge of her marriage portion; one hundred and fifty vested in trustees, for the benefit of her and her issue; his "broad silver gilt bowl;" and fifty pounds, as a compensation for the surrender of her interest in a copyhold estate to her sister Susanna.

Susanna, the eldest of the poet's family, married, in June, 1607, Dr. John Hall, a phy-

* Note Q.

† Parish Register.

‡ Rowe, Strat. Regist.

sician settled in Stratford, whom she survived fourteen years. *

The causes which led to the marked distinction, made in Shakspeare's will, between his two surviving children, are buried in oblivion. The fact alone remains, that while Judith is only remembered by legacies to the amount of three hundred pounds, Susanna is invested with the entire remainder of her father's ample property, excepting a few legacies. His capital dwelling-house in Stratford, called New Place; two houses in Henley Street; various lands and tenements in, and in the neighbourhood of, Stratford; and his house in Blackfriars; are all specifically given to her. The residue of his estate, after the discharge of his funeral and testamentary expences, is devised to her and her husband, who are likewise nominated the executors of the will.

This favorite daughter of Shakspeare died in July, 1649, aged sixty-six, and her tomb-stone recorded her wit, her piety, and her humanity. †

“ Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,
 Wise to salvation, was good mistress Hall.
 Something of Shakspeare was in that, but this
 Wholly of him with whom she's now in blisse.

* Strat. Regist.

† Strat. Regist. The verses are not now remaining on the stone, but have been preserved by Dugdale.

Then, passenger, hast ne'er a teare,
 To weepe with her that wept with all :
 That wept, yet set herselfe to chere
 Them up with comforts cordiall ?

Her love shall live, her mercy spread,
 When thou hast ne'er a teare to shed."

It is not to be presumed that the art of writing was among the accomplishments of this lady, as the *mark* of her sister Judith appears to a deed still extant, accompanied by the explanatory appendage of "*Signum Judith Shakspeare.*" *

The only child of Dr. and Mrs. Hall was a daughter named Elizabeth. At the time of her grandfather's death, she was eight years of age. His remembrances of her in his will are, a contingent interest in a hundred pounds bequeathed to his daughter Judith and her heirs, and "all his plate †," with the exception of the broad silver and gilt bowl given to her aunt Judith.

Elizabeth Hall married a Mr. Thomas Nash. He died in April, 1647 ; and his widow, after the expiration of two years, was united to Sir John Barnard, of Abington, Northamptonshire, where

* Wheeler's Guide to Stratford.

† Shakspeare bequeathed his plate twice : in the last item of the will, which constitutes Dr. and Mrs. Hall residuary legatees, he gives "all the rest of his goods, chattels, leases, *plate*, jewels, &c."

she was buried in 1669-70. She left no children, and thus the family of Shakspeare became extinct.

“Worthy,” “gentle,” and “beloved,” are the epithets uniformly connected with the contemporary mention of Shakspeare’s name. He is also described as a man of a ready, smooth, and pleasant wit.* “Many were the wit-combates,” says Fuller, “between Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. I behold them like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man of war. Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances; Shakspeare, like the latter, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention.” This far-fetched simile of the quaint biographer is no very happy illustration of conversational powers rich in variety, and astonishing in versatility. A few anecdotes have been transmitted as specimens of Shakspeare’s talent at repartee, but they are really unworthy of transcription, and must be deemed most unfortunate specimens of the colloquial brilliancy of a man who was not the meanest member of a club of which Jon-

* Rowe and Aubrey.

son, Beaumont, Fletcher, Selden, Cotton, Carew, Martin, and Donne were members, and whose meetings furnished matter for retrospective delight in so competent a judge as Beaumont.

“ What things have we seen
 Done at the *Mermaid!* heard words that have been
 So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
 As if that every one from whom they came
 Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest.”*

The best specimen of Shakspeare's extemporary wit, is his jocular epitaph on Mr. John Combe, who had amassed great wealth by the practice of usury. In the gaiety of conversation, Combe told the poet that he fancied he intended to furnish his epitaph; and since whatever might be said of him after he was dead must be unknown to him, he requested that it might be written forthwith: Shakspeare immediately gave him the following verses:

“ *Ten in the hundred* lies here ingrav'd;
 'Tis a hundred to ten his soul is not sav'd:
 If any man ask, Who lies in this tomb,
 Oh! oh! quoth the devil, 'tis my John-a-Combe.”†

It is asserted of Shakspeare, that he was a handsome, well-shaped man‡; but as it is not

* Beaumont's Letter to Jonson.

† Rowe and Aubrey.

‡ Aubrey.

known that any authentic likeness of him exists, fancy is left at liberty to imagine the peculiar conformation of his features. Pictures, indeed, are not wanting whose claims to authenticity have been confidently asserted; but their merits so generally fade before the test of examination, that the pretensions of few are worthy of consideration.

If the positive testimony of a contemporary, and an associate, could authenticate a portrait, the verses of Ben Jonson on the engraving by Droeshout, attached to the first folio edition of Shakspeare's works, its exact resemblance to the immortal dramatist ought to be considered as established.

“ This figure that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakspeare cut;
Wherein the graver had a strife
With nature, to out-do the life.
O, could he but have drawn his wit
As well in brass, as he hath hit
His face, the print would then surpass
All that was ever writ in brass;
But since he cannot, reader, look
Not on his picture, but his book.”

Without the reader has had the misfortune to behold this much eulogised specimen of the graphic art, he will be surprised to learn, that the plate is not only at variance with the tradition

of Shakspeare's appearance having been prepossessing; but irreconcilable with the belief of its ever having borne a striking resemblance to any human being. Its defects, indeed, are so obvious, that it has been thought necessary to apologise for Jonson by the production of instances of similar prostitutions of compliment; and, also, by the supposition, that he never saw the engraving, but wrote his lines from his recollection of the picture from which it was made, confiding in the ability of Droeshout to execute a faithful copy.

Not many years ago, an old painting was produced, and loudly proclaimed, as that long lost treasure the original of Droeshout's engraving. The history of its purchase out of the Boar's Head, in Eastcheap, "where Shakspeare and his friends used to resort," was advanced with becoming diffidence; but the authenticity of the portrait was confidently urged, on the ground of its near resemblance to the head of Shakspeare in the first folio, and the inscription on its back, "Guil. Shakspeare, 1597. R. N." The strenuous patronage of Mr. Steevens insured its popularity for a time; but its pretensions gradually lost ground before the sensible reflection, that where the history of a picture was mysterious, coincidences so easily contrived as a resemblance to

the first folio, and the name of the poet on the back, could not be received as conclusive evidence in its favour. In 1792, this picture was in the possession of Mr. Felton, of Drayton in Shropshire, and thus became denominated the "Felton Shakspeare." It was afterwards purchased by the Boydells.

About 1725, a mezzotinto print was scraped by Simon, said to be from an original picture of Shakspeare by Zoust or Soest. But as the earliest picture painted by Zoust, in England, was in 1657, the story is falsified by discordant dates.

Another picture, now belonging to Mr. Jennens of Gopsal in Leicestershire, has been advanced as a portrait of Shakspeare; the master, Cornelius Jansen. Its claims have generally been disallowed, in consequence of an assertion of Horace Walpole, that Jansen never saw England till 1618. The assertion is incorrect; and no objection founded on an anachronism can be raised against the genuineness of this picture.

The picture in the possession of Lord Oxford, turns out to be a portrait, not of Shakspeare, but of James the First! Pope's edition of our author's works was *ornamented* by an engraving from this head.

In the Somerville family, there is a tradition, that an ancestor of Somerville the poet lived in

habits of intimacy with Shakspeare, especially after his retirement; and that, at his request, a portrait of the dramatist was painted. A small miniature, very richly set, has descended with the tradition, and is believed by its present possessor, Sir James Bland Burgess, to be an original picture of Shakspeare. It is not stated at what period of life Shakspeare gratified the wishes of his friend, but the miniature is far too youthful for the representation of a man of forty-five, which Shakspeare must have been when he retired to Stratford. This, however, forms no serious objection against the picture, for it might have been painted when Shakspeare was as youthful as it represents him.

The picture in the collection of the Marquis of Buckingham, at Stowe, usually called the "Chandos portrait," presents a very fair pedigree of possessors up to Betterton the actor; but there, where evidence is most wanted, it begins to fail. It came into Betterton's possession, it is said, after the death of Sir William Davenant, but whether by purchase, or otherwise, does not appear: administration of Davenant's effects was granted to his principal creditor in 1668. The previous history of the picture is still more unsatisfactory. It is not ascertained that Davenant himself attached any importance

to it; no credible account exists of the channel through which he obtained it; and the traditions respecting the artist who painted it are vague and contradictory.

The establishing of the claims of either the Chandos portrait, or the Somerville miniature, would invalidate the claims of the other; for of two pictures so exceedingly unlike, it is impossible to admit the genuineness of both. Of the two portraits, the reader would most readily believe the Somerville a resemblance of Shakspeare, if it were admissible to give any weight to prepossession: the countenance of the Chandos picture is heavy, dull, and inexpressive.

Of the prints which have been so prodigally issued of Shakspeare, some are mere fanciful delineations of the artist; some copies of the various *genuine* portraits of the bard found one day and forgotten on the next; but for the most part they are to be traced to the sources already pointed out. The origin of the head attached to the first folio is uncertain; but if, as is extremely probable, it was copied from an original picture, it is entitled, notwithstanding its abominable imitation of humanity, to somewhat more consideration than copies of unauthenticated pictures.

It is a tradition at Stratford, that Shakspeare's

monumental bust was copied from a cast after nature. In imitation of nature, the hands and face were painted flesh colour, the eyes of a light hazel, and the hair and beard auburn; the doublet or coat was scarlet, and covered with a loose black gown, or tabard, without sleeves; the upper part of the cushion was green, the under half crimson, and the tassels gilt.

After remaining in this state above one hundred and twenty years, Mr. John Ward, grandfather of the Kembles, caused it to be repaired, and the original colours revived, from the profits of the performance of *Othello*, in 1748. In 1793, Mr. Malone was inspired with the ambition of connecting his name with Shakspeare's bust. His purpose was ingeniously effected by covering it over with one or more coats of white paint. This injudicious destruction of the original character of the figure, deprived it of more than half its interest; for it is no longer to be seen as Shakspeare's friends and acquaintances were wont to gaze upon it.

No pretensions whatever are made to originality by any other bust or statue of Shakspeare. The head of the statue in Westminster Abbey, executed by Scheemaker, was modelled from Simon's mezzotinto print. The figure carved by Roubiliac, for Garrick, was from the

same authority; with the adoption of a hint or two from the Chandos picture. Hence the head so universally recognised in casts, seals, and other ornaments, as that of Shakspeare.

It was seven years subsequent to the death of Shakspeare, before any publication of the whole of his dramatic works was attempted, the policy of the managers, whose principal profits arose from the attraction of manuscript plays, pointing out to them the necessity of keeping the dramas belonging to their theatres unpublished. Fourteen* plays of Shakspeare, however, appeared singly, in quarto, previous to the death of their author, and Othello was printed in the year 1622. Of these plays, Love's Labour's Lost, and Much Ado about Nothing, only, did not reach a second edition; the first part of Henry the Fourth, went into a sixth, and Richard the Third, even to a seventh impression.

Though something must be allowed to the desire of the managers to enhance the value of their own edition, their description of all the quartos, as "stolne, and surreptitious copies,

* Richard II., Richard III., Romeo and Juliet, Love's Labour's Lost, Henry IV., part one and two, Henry V., Merchant of Venice, Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado about Nothing, Merry Wives of Windsor, Hamlet, Lear, and Troilus and Cressida.

mained and deformed by the fraudes and stealthes of injurious impostors," points out sufficiently clearly the means by which they found their way into the world. They were, in fact, purloined from the theatre, entire, when opportunity afforded time for the completion of a perfect transcript from the prompter's book, or piecemeal, as the parts written out for the different players could be procured. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that there are many chasms in their matter, and frequent incoherencies in their scenes. With the exception of Othello, they are not divided into either acts or scenes; entries are frequently given to persons who take no part in the business of the stage; other persons whose entrances were not noticed are engaged in action; exits are frequently marked in improper places; very few stage directions are to be met with; and speeches are frequently assigned to wrong characters, and sometimes even the name of the actor who performed the part is inserted in the text, instead of that of the *dramatis personæ*. The text throughout is miserably spelt; uncommon words are deformed almost beyond the possibility of recognition; prose is often printed for verse, and verse as frequently for prose. If amidst a mass of error, of which this is no exaggerated account, any

preference is to be given to one edition over another, it is to the earlier copies ; for additional errors were the consequence of every renewed passage through the press. It may be a matter of amusement to some readers, perhaps, to witness a specimen of the titles under which such of Shakspeare's plays as appeared in quarto were recommended to the public for purchase. "The Tragedy of Richard the Third. Containing his treacherous Plots against his brother Clarence : the pittieful Murder of his innocent Nephewes : his tyrannical Usurpation : with the whole of his detested Life, and most deserved Death. As it hath been lately acted by the Right Honorable the Lord Chamberlaine his servants." "A most plesaunt and excellent conceited comedie, of Syr John Falstaffe and the Merrie Wives of Windsor. Entermixed with sundrie variable and pleasing Humors, of Syr Hugh the Welch Knight, Justice Shallow, and his wise Cousin, M. Slender. With the swaggering vaine of auncient Pistoll and Corporall Nym. By William Shakspeare. As it hath, &c. &c." "M. William Shake-speare his True Chronicle History of the Life and Death of King Lear, and his Three Daughters. With the unfortunate Life of Edgar, Sonne and Heire to the Earle of Glocester, and his sullen and assumed Humour of Tom of

Bedlam. As it was plaid before the King's Majesty at White-Hall, uppon S. Stephens Night; in Christmas Hollidaies. By his Majesties Servants playing usually at the Globe on the Banck-side."

The *art* of puffing is improved, but our ancestors were not a jot behind us in intention.

To remedy the defects of the quartos, and to present the world with an entire collection of Shakspeare's dramatic works, was the professed object of "Henrie Condell and John Heminge," the managers of the Globe theatre, and the friends and fellows of Shakspeare, in publishing their folio in 1623. Such plays as had already appeared were "now offer'd cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers as he conceived them." The pretensions were great, but the performance mean, for the folio exhibits reprints of several of those very quartos which its preface labours to depreciate; reprints encumbered too with the typographical errors which the folio accumulated as it went through the press. The materials, therefore, used by the players in their edition were not of a value superior to those that had belonged to the publishers of the quarto plays. Indeed there is no doubt but that they were essentially the same:—the prompter's book,

where it contained the entire play, and the parts written out for the actors when the piece existed in no single manuscript. Like the quartos, the folio transposes verses, assigns speeches to wrong characters, inserts the names of actors instead of those of the dramatis personæ, confounds and mixes characters together, prints verse for prose and prose for verse.

It must be mentioned in praise of the folio, that most of its plays are divided into acts, and many into both acts and scenes, and the divisions were made by competent authority, if we may argue from the uniformity of principle apparent in much of the volume; but still scenes not unfrequently end without a pause in the action, and stand in an order perfectly unnatural, shuffled backwards or forwards in absurd confusion.

The folio rejected the descriptive titles appended to the quartos, simply calling each play by the name which now distinguishes it; and in obedience to the statute 3 James 1. cap. 21., which prohibits, under severe penalties, the use of the sacred name in any plays or interludes, substituted general terms for the awful name of the Deity, often impiously profaned by invocation on the stage.

A second folio was published in 1632, a volume described by all the editors of Shakspeare,

with the exception of Steevens, as utterly worthless. It is a reprint of the former folio, with hundreds of additional errors, the productions of chance, negligence, and ignorance.

A third folio appeared in 1664, exhibiting a still more miserable copy of the first edition, with seven additional plays* falsely attributed to Shakspeare. It was the good fortune of this edition to be almost entirely destroyed in the fire of London, in 1666, so that copies of it are now more rare than those of the first folio itself.

A fourth folio, originating in the same source, issued from the press in 1685; it rather fell below than rose above the merit of its predecessors.

Such were the only editions of Shakspeare before the world when, in 1709, Rowe's octavo edition in seven volumes appeared. Rowe was fully aware of the degraded state of the poet's text, and acknowledged "that there was nothing left but to compare the several editions, and give the true reading as well as he could from thence;" yet he perversely neglected the performance of this important duty altogether, and printed his volumes from the latest of the folios, simply directing his attention to the correction

* *Lochrine, The London Prodigal, Pericles, The Puritan, Sir John Oldcastle, Thomas Lord Cromwell, and the Yorkshire Tragedy.*

of the grossest of the printer's errors, and to the division of such plays into acts and scenes as had been hitherto undivided. Notwithstanding the imperfections of this edition, its success was so great that it was reprinted in nine volumes duodecimo in 1714.

Pope was the next editor of Shakspeare. He perfectly understood the defects of the existing editions, and boldly undertook to collate the quartos themselves, professing to adopt no reading unsanctioned by their authority, or that of the early folio, and asserting his "religious abhorrence" of all innovation, or the indulgence of any private sense or conjecture. But he soon found the task he had undertaken "dull," and adopted a much more compendious mode of criticism. He took Rowe's text as the groundwork of his own, and, by a partial collation of the old copies, restored many passages to their integrity, but at the same time indulged himself in the liberty of rejecting whatever he disliked, of altering whatever he did not understand, and of revising Shakspeare with as little fearlessness and as much diligence as he would have sat down to the correction of his own poems. Pope's edition was printed in six volumes quarto, in 1725, and in ten volumes duodecimo, in 1728.

In 1733 Theobald followed Pope, and by a

more strict adherence to the old copies, and many judicious notes, fully earned the praise of having superseded him. But the foundation of Theobald's edition was laid in error; the text he undertook to correct was that of Pope, and his collation of the old copies was neither sufficiently extensive nor accurate to make very considerable progress towards its amendment. He, nevertheless, purged it from many arbitrary corruptions, and though he cannot himself be acquitted from the charge of innovation, yet in comparison with Pope, he appears a judicious critic. His first edition was in seven vols. octavo; his second in eight vols. duodecimo, in 1740.

A splendid edition of Shakspeare was printed at Oxford, in 1744, by Sir Thomas Hanmer, but with little advantage to the poet. Hanmer thought all was right that had been done by former editors, and for himself he seems to have despised all common canons of criticism. He disdained reference to either the quartos or folios, and printed the text of Pope, adding whatever he conjectured would contribute to the beauty, harmony, or force of his author.

In 1747 Bishop Warburton published the dramatist in eight octavo volumes. The avowed champion of Pope acted consistently in making that poet's edition the ground-work of his own,

and he more than emulated the boldness of his *protégé* in the temerity with which he himself trod the path of criticism. Of all the guides through the difficulties of a corrupted text, antiquated phraseology, and obscure expression, Warburton was the most incompetent. No consideration restrained him from the substitution of his own chimerical conceits in the place of his author's text, and in the copious notes which accompanied it, he perpetually exhibits the most perverse interpretations, and improbable conjectures; he at one time gives the author more profundity of meaning than the sentence admits, and at another discovers absurdities, where the sense is plain to every other reader. His emendations may sometimes, indeed, be thought successful; but they are fortunate guesses, rather than wise conclusions.

Nearly a century and a half had elapsed since the death of Shakspeare, and no critical edition of his works existed which could boast a higher authority for its text, than the fourth folio, partially amended, or capriciously and ignorantly altered. The dramatist now fell into different hands, and a proper basis was laid for a correct text. The first folio, collated with whatever earlier copies the editor could procure, was the foundation of Johnson's edition, in eight

volumes, octavo, published in 1765. Much of Johnson's text is far more accurate than that of any of his predecessors, and so correct was his acumen as a verbal critic, that had his diligence extended over the whole of his work, the philological labours of others would have been spared. But indolence was his bane; his text is in consequence faulty, and his acquaintance with the domestic history of the Elizabethan age was so superficial that he could not perform the harmless drudgery of explaining the local allusions of his author. Johnson's skill was great in disentangling complicated passages, and his paraphrases are remarkable for their accuracy and beauty. When Shakspeare was the poet of common life, Johnson was his faithful interpreter, for the author of "The Rambler" knew human nature well; but he could not watch his course through the vast regions of the imagination, and his adamant and rugged mind was impassive to the playful sparkles of Shakspeare's fancy. Johnson's general critical abilities are displayed in his noble Preface; but his unfitness for his office of commentator on Shakspeare is manifest in his observations at the close of each play, than which nothing can be more tame, insipid, and unsatisfactory. It is singular, that his

subject no where inspires him, except when he is dilating on the character of Falstaff.

Johnson was assisted by Steevens, in the publication of another edition of Shakspeare in 1773, in ten octavo volumes; the result of their joint labours was a new publication of the same number of volumes in 1778; and a third edition, bearing the names Johnson and Steevens, appeared, under the superintendence of Isaac Reed, in 1785.

There is no necessity for me to notice at any length Capell's edition, in ten crown-octavo volumes, in 1768, for the work is more remarkable for typographical beauty than critical merit; and I pass on at once to the names of Steevens and Malone.

Steevens commenced his career of labour in the cause of Shakspeare in 1766, by superintending the reprint of such of the dramatist's plays as had made their appearance in quarto, and preparing a list, to accompany them, of the various readings of the different quarto editions of each play. Where the dissimilarity between the early and later editions was so great as to create a suspicion that the former was a first draft which the author afterwards expanded, Mr. Steevens printed the first as well as the subsequent copy, conceiving that there were "many persons,

who, not contented with the possession of a finished picture of some great master, would be desirous to procure the first sketch that was made for it, that they might have the pleasure of tracing the progress of the artist from the first colouring to the finishing stroke.”

Steevens subsequently assisted Johnson, but in 1793 he appeared as an independent editor of Shakspeare, though he affixed to his work the name of his former coadjutor, being unable, as he says with modesty and beauty, “to forego an additional opportunity of recording in a title page that he had once the honour of being united in a task of literature with Dr. Samuel Johnson.” This was the last edition of Shakspeare of which Steevens superintended the publication, but his attention to a subject which employed so many years of his life did not relax, and previous to his death, in 1800, he had prepared another edition in twenty-one volumes, on which Mr. Isaac Reed bestowed his attention in its passage through the press in 1803.

In the course of his Shakspearean labours, Steevens received many valuable communications from Malone; who, in 1780, added to Steevens' second edition two supplementary volumes, containing Shakspeare's Poems, the seven spurious plays ascribed to him by the third folio, and

additional notes on the poet's genuine plays. To Reed's edition of Johnson and Steevens he contributed some notes also, which occasionally controverted Steevens' opinions, and, in 1790, printed an entire and independent edition of Shakspeare in ten octavo volumes.

Malone's industry did not forsake him here, for he employed himself up to the hour of his death in 1812, in the preparation of an improved edition of the poet. The materials he collected were arranged and published by Boswell, as a second edition of Malone's Shakspeare, in twenty-one octavo volumes, in 1821.

Steevens was a wit, a scholar, and a man of taste. He was deeply read in the literature of Shakspeare's age, and explained with skill many of the local allusions of his author. But Steevens was no poet, and he could not, therefore, comment on the deep pathos and lofty imaginings of Shakspeare. His want of poetic feeling diminished even his philological merits. He often rejected readings both of the quartos and the folios for the adoption of others which harmonised, as he thought, a line previously halting in the measure. He loved only the artificial and stately march of epic verse, and 'wood notes wild' whispered no charm to his ear.

As a philologist Malone is a much safer guide. His first principle was a rigid adherence to the elder copies, and when any intelligible meaning was to be extracted from those sources, he professed never to admit into his page a reading unauthorised by the earliest quarto extant, where the play had been published in quarto, or by the first folio, when the play had originally made its appearance there ; and on no occasion whatever did he adopt a reading unsanctioned by authority without apprising his reader of the liberty he had taken.

Malone, like Steevens, was destitute of poetic feeling, and he had not the wit and taste of his rival. In knowledge they were equals. Steevens had his acquirements at his free and immediate command. He applies them on all occasions with perfect facility, unencumbered by their bulk, and unconfused by their desultoriness. His vivacity frolicks beneath the trammels of the most uninteresting minutiae, and his wit enlivens the reader's passage through the dreary paths of black letter quotation. But discretion did not always guide him in the exercise of his wit, and his love of minutiae was not always harmless. He often wrote notes as traps to entangle his fellow labourers in error, and insure

himself a triumph in confuting them; and his illustrations of passages the most disgusting are remarkable for their elaborateness. It aggravates his crime that he shrunk from responsibility, and sought refuge from reprobation and disgrace, under the borrowed names of Collins and of Anmer.*

The hostility in which Steevens and Malone continually appear in their notes, forces them into comparison with each other. Malone, unlike Steevens, always appears oppressed by his acquisitions, and all he accomplished, he accomplished with effort. He wanted judgment to direct him in the distinction of great from little things; all matters were, in his estimation, equally important; he bestows as many words on a trivial subject as on one of real consequence. Steevens' intellectual powers were certainly superior to Malone's, but Steevens' unsound principles of criticism, and dubious honesty, weigh heavily against him. Malone's strict adherence to the dry canons of criticism is an ad-

* Steevens has lately been completely unmasked by two writers:—Miss Hawkins, in her book of anecdotes; and more skilfully by D'Israeli in his paper on "Puck the Commentator," in the second series of the *Curiosities of Literature*.

mirable warrant for the integrity of the text he has printed; and the indisputable uprightness of his intentions forms a powerful counterpoise to the mental superiority of his less conscientious rival.

NOTES.

NOTE A.

No attempt was made to give an account of the life of Shakspeare till near a century after his decease. The name of Shakspeare, indeed, occurs in Dugdale's Antiquities of Warwickshire, in Fuller's Worthies, and in Phillips' *Theatrum Poetarum*, but only in the way of incidental notice. Winstanley's *Lives of the Poets*, Langbaine, Blount, Gildon, and Antony Wood, added nothing new. It remained for Rowe, in 1709, to give the first connected life of Shakspeare. The materials from which he wrote were derived, as he himself informs us, from Thomas Betterton, the player, whose veneration of the memory of Shakspeare induced him to take a journey into Warwickshire to collect such information as remained respecting him.

All anecdotes relative to the poet's residence in Stratford, whether before or after his emigration to London, were in little danger of falsification in his native town. Very strong evidence existed of the occurrences of his early life up to 1646, when his sister Joan died. In a long continued intercourse with their aunt, the two daughters of Shakspeare could not fail to acquire a knowledge of all the facts of which she was mistress, and they pos-

essed the advantage of correcting all they heard from her, and of learning a great variety of other particulars, from the conversation of their father and their mother, and from their own observation, the youngest of these daughters being no less than thirty-two years of age when the poet died, and seven years older at the death of her mother. Shakspeare's daughters, therefore, may reasonably be supposed to have been acquainted with many particulars of his early days, the business, and circumstances of their father and grandfather, their mother's maiden name and condition, and, particularly, the occurrences that drove their father from Stratford to seek his fortune in the metropolis. Of the nature of his occupation in London they must have been well aware; but their notions of his customary habits of life there were, in all probability, general and confused. Every particular relative to his retirement at Stratford must have been as familiar to them as the occurrences of their own lives. The youngest of these ladies survived till 1662, the eldest till 1649, leaving behind her a daughter born in 1607-8.

Familiarised to her mind by personal recollection, and endeared to her by an affectionate remembrance in his will, Elizabeth Hall had every inducement to listen with attention to the history and anecdotes of her illustrious grandfather, of which her relatives were the repositories. It is surely not too much to assume, that in the unusually prolonged intercourse of forty years with her mother, and of fifty-four years with her aunt, Judith Queeny, she became nearly as well informed upon the subject as themselves, and that, consequently,

up to the year 1670, when Lady Barnard died, a history, not only of great credibility, but of undoubted authenticity, existed of a large portion of the poet's life.

Nor were Shakspeare's immediate descendants the only channels through which his history would be transmitted. His sister Joan left three sons, all remembered by legacies in their uncle's will. The second of these sons, Thomas, was the father of George Hart, whose family was remarkably numerous, filling the parish-register of Stratford with an uninterrupted succession of births, marriages, and deaths, through the whole of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In his retirement at Stratford, Shakspeare connected himself with a small circle of intimates, among whom, in the ordinary course of things, detailed portions of his life would from time to time be scattered. Of the various persons not of his own family, to whom he bequeathed legacies, two, Mr. Thomas Coomb, and Shakspeare's godson, William Walker, survived to advanced ages; Mr. Coomb died in 1657, leaving an elder brother, who lived ten years later. William Walker lived till 1679-80.

Up to a late period, therefore, in the seventeenth century, there was undoubtedly much authentic information in Stratford respecting Shakspeare. Some facts, of course, sunk every year into oblivion, and some were perverted by misrepresentation; but when the accumulated and extraordinary means which existed for the propagation and preservation of the truth are reflected upon, it is very difficult to conclude that when Better-

ton instituted his inquiries, little more than twenty years after the death of Shakspeare's grand-daughter, fables only remained for him to collect. The facts adduced by Betterton are indeed few; but this leads to the inference that he was scrupulous, not careless, in his inquiries. The "Picturesque Tourist" to Stratford shewed, nearly a century later, how successful Betterton might have been had he opened his ears to every idle tale. With respect to the authority of Rowe, I am completely at issue with Malone: I think Rowe's account substantially correct, and, consequently, that the modern biographer has not fulfilled his boast, that he would prove to be false eight out of the ten facts which Rowe advances.

The anecdotes related of Shakspeare by Mr. Jones and Mr. Taylor are of the same class of traditionary evidence. Mr. Jones died at Tarbick, a village in Worcestershire, in 1703, upwards of ninety years old, and is the relator of an anecdote which he remembered to have heard from many old people at Stratford. Mr. Taylor, an alderman of Warwick, was eighty-five years old in 1790. When a boy he lived at the next house to New Place, which his family had occupied almost three hundred years.

About 1680, Mr. Aubrey was engaged in the collection of anecdotes respecting the most eminent English writers. His work was never completed, but his manuscripts are now repositied in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. Aubrey was on terms of intimacy with most literary men of his day, and acquainted with many of the players. His opportunities, therefore, for the col-

lection of anecdotes were great ; but, unhappily, all he heard he believed, and all he believed he committed to paper. As an authority for any thing relative to Shakspeare, he is by no means to be placed on a footing with Rowe. Rowe and Betterton, apparently, consulted their judgment before they recorded the result of their enquiries : Aubrey had no judgment to consult.

Mr. William Oldys, Norry King at Arms, well known for the share he had in the compilation of the *Biographia Britannia*, left several quires of paper covered with collections for a regular life of Shakspeare, but they present few circumstances either of novelty or information ; and even these must be received with caution. Oldys was a very careful writer, and his insertion of any of these materials in a life of Shakspeare by him, would have stamped them with the character of authenticity, for he would not so have used them without examination. At present they can only be received as evidence unwarranted by any opinion of his own upon their merits ; that is, merely as indications of the belief or tradition of the time in which they were collected.

NOTE B.

MANY more varieties might be quoted ; for the name of Shakspeare is an extremely apposite instance of the singular forms which surnames assumed under the loose orthography of our ancestors, who appeared to have followed no guide but sound in their spelling. Shakspeare himself wrote his name variously : there are,

altogether, five signatures, which some writers presume to be genuine autographs: three are indisputably so: — one to a mortgage deed executed in 1613, — *Wm. Shakspe^a*; a second to a conveyance from Henry Walker to the poet, *William Shaksper*; and one upon each of the three briefs of his will, *William Shackspere*, *William Shakspere*, *William Shakspeare*. The contractions exhibited by the two first signatures neutralize their evidence, as it is with respect to the last syllable only that any doubt exists; and, in regard to the signatures to the will, a sort of doubt has been cast on the first and second, by the suggestion that they might be the hand-writing of the notary employed on the occasion: the third signature to the will is clear and decisive; in deference to which, the poet's name will, throughout the pages of these volumes, be written Shakspeare.

NOTE C.

THE instrument which first assigned arms to John Shakspeare is no where to be found; but in a note at the bottom of the grant made in 1596 it is stated, that he then produced “a patent thereof under Clarence Cook's hand;” and, in the exemplification made in 1599, that he produced his ancient coat of arms assigned to him while he was bailiff of Stratford. The arms are thus described in the last document: “In a field of gould upon a bend sables a speare of the first, the point upward, heddéd argent; and for his crest or cog-

nizance, a falcon with his wyngs displayed, standing on a wrethe of his coullers, supporting a speare armed hedded, or steeled sylver, fyxed upon a helmet with mantell and tassels." In the same document (1599) the christian name of Mrs. Shakspeare is omitted, and her father erroneously designated of *Wellingcote*. The instrument of 1596, calls her "*Mary*, daughter and heyress of Robert Arden of *Wilmecote*."

Some explanation is necessary of the apparent neglect of the authorities of these grants or confirmations of arms, in the account which has been given of the Shakspeare family. The asserticn of these instruments is, that the ancestors of John Shakspeare were advanced and rewarded for their services to Henry the Seventh, by a grant of lands in those parts of Warwickshire, where they had continued for some descents, in good reputation and credit. The grant of 1596 reads "whose parent and late antecessors," which is corrected in another copy, by an interlineation, into "whose grandfather:" the confirmation of 1599 says, "whose parent and great-grandfather." I pass over the contradictions of the heralds as immaterial, and not at all affecting the question as to the persons meant by the "antecessors" of John Shakspeare. I do not think that the actual father, grandfather, great-grandfather, or any actual ancestor of John Shakspeare was at all in the contemplation of the heralds; 1st, because there is no trace whatever of a grant to any of the lineal ancestors of John Shakspeare, in the chapel of the rolls, during the whole reign of Henry the Seventh; 2dly, because there is no trace of any person of the name of Shakspeare

ever having been in possession of lands or tenements, said to have been granted by royal bounty; but, on the contrary, the whole family, wherever they appear, present an uniform appearance of respectability without wealth; 3dly, because that which is quite irreconcilable, when interpreted of the lineal ancestor of John Shakspeare, is almost literally true of the ancestors of his wife, whose grandfather, Robert Arden, was groom of the bed-chamber to Henry VII., keeper of the royal park called Aldercar, bailiff of the lordship of Codnore, and keeper of the park there. In 1507, he obtained a lease from the crown of the manor of Yoxsall, in Stafford, of above 4600 acres for twenty-one years, at the low annual rent of forty-two pounds. I have no hesitation, therefore, to believe, that the Arden's, and not the Shakspeare's, were in the contemplation of the heralds when they spoke of the "antecessors" of the poet's father. Nor is any difficulty involved in this belief, it being usual in, and long after, the sixteenth century, for a husband to speak of the relatives of his wife in the same terms as he did of his own. Edward Alleyn, the player, constantly styles Philip Henslow his *father*, though he was only his wife's *step-father*. Thomas Nash, who married the poet's grand-daughter, Elizabeth Hall, calls Mrs. Hall in his will, his *mother*. Malone has produced a variety of instances of the lax application of the terms of relationship. (Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 29. 31-2. note.) The inaccuracy and confusion of the heralds in these instruments, is a proof that they were not masters of the subject before them, which renders it little surprising that the grant of lands

which they say was in Warwick, should turn out to have been in Stafford. To those who believe them incapable of the commission of such an error, the foregoing reasoning will be inconclusive, and consequently, in their estimation, fatal to the account given of John Shakspeare in the text.

NOTE D.

CONSIDERABLE obscurity has, from the days of Rowe, hung over the accounts of John Shakspeare's family, originating in the unhesitating application to the father of the poet of every circumstance recorded in the parish-register of John Shakspeare. After having eight children ascribed to him between 1558 and 1580, John Shakspeare is said, in 1584, to have married Margery Roberts, who died 1587. The register, however, goes on to record the birth of three children of John Shakspeare between March 1588-9, and September 1591. Whence it was inferred, that the poet's mother, Mary, though the register is silent, died shortly after 1580: that his father re-married in 1584, and that, on the death of his second wife, was still so enamoured of the matrimonial yoke as a third time to subject himself to its endurance, and became the father of the three children born from 1588 to 1591, he himself dying in 1601, and his third wife surviving him till 1608, when the death of Mary Shakspeare, widow, occurs. As there were no positive contradictions in this account, it was generally acquiesced in, though not as perfectly satisfactory.

Malone has cleared the way for a much more natural statement, by observing, that throughout the register the father of the poet is *invariably* called *John Shakspeare*, without any distinction whatever, previous to his filling the office of high bailiff; but subsequently, wherever the baptisms or deaths of his children are recorded, he is denominated *Mr. John Shakspeare (filius aut filia Magistri Shakspeare)*, a distinction ever afterwards conferred upon him, as upon every other bailiff, in all the records of the proceedings of the corporation. Now the person who married Margery Roberts fifteen years after the poet's father had been chief magistrate of Stratford, is simply called *John Shakspeare*, and the three children, Ursula, Humphrey, and Philip, born between 1588 and 1591, are described as the children of John Shakspeare, without any distinction or addition to the name whatever. It admits not, therefore, of the slightest doubt, that the husband of Margery Roberts, and the father of the three children, was not the quondam bailiff of the borough. In answer to the question, who then was he? it is replied, in all probability, John Shakspeare, a shoe-maker, who, not being a native of the town, paid, in 1585-6, thirty shillings for his freedom in the Shoe-makers' Company; served as constable in 1586 and 1587; who had money advanced him by the corporation in 1590; was accepted in two cases as a security for the re-payment of money advanced by them to other individuals, and who was master of the Shoe-makers' Company 1592. (Regis. Burg. Strat.)

NOTE E.

THE ingenuity of commentators will be tasked anew by the discovery that Shakspeare's father was a glover. The scenes of the dramatist must be ransacked for allusions to that indispensable feature in a gentleman's apparel, a pair of gloves. Passages must now be tortured to furnish evidence of the poet's intimate knowledge of the details of the business of a glove-maker. How much his own works countenance the tradition that he was a wool-dealer, may be seen in the notes on "Let me see: — Every 'leven wether — tods; every tod yields — pound and odd shilling; fifteen hundred shorn, — What comes the wool to?" (Winter's Tale, Act IV. sc. 2.) The reader may consult also, though he would hardly have guessed it, the notes on

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

Hamlet, Act V. sc. 2.

Shakspeare is reported to have been a butcher — "Pat, like the catastrophe of the old comedy."

"And as the butcher takes away the calf
And binds the wretch, and beats it when it strays,
Bearing it to the bloody slaughter-house;
Even so, remorseless, have they borne him hence.
And as the dam runs lowing up and down,
Looking the way her harmless young one went,
And can do nought but wail her darling's loss;
Even so," &c.

Henry VI. part 2. Act III. sc. 1.

In these cases, however, there is a matter of reliance — the voice of tradition. But it is straining for conse-

quences to argue from the dramatist's technical accuracy in the use of legal phrases, that he was a clerk in the office of a country attorney; and Malone is more than usually reprehensible in endeavouring to support so bold a conjecture, by the suggestion that the school-master story of Aubrey is a mere *adumbration* of the truth. Aubrey's evidence is positive, — “ he understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger years a school-master in the country;” and is entitled to as much credit as any other tradition he has preserved, neither involving in itself improbability, nor standing in opposition to any recorded fact.

NOTE F.

SHAKSPEARE'S wife was not of “ Shottery,” as has been affirmed by the author of the “ Picturesque Tour to the Banks of the Avon,” and his blundering followers. What then becomes of the cottage at Shottery, where the wife of the poet and her parents dwelt, and in which their descendants, who are poor and numerous, still continue to reside? Here the credulous have been gratified by the display of undoubted relics of the poet. Very particular mention is made of a bed, which an old woman of seventy had slept in from her childhood, and had always been told it had been there since the house was built. Her absolute refusal to part with this treasure, is adduced as a proof that the purchasers of the Shakspearian relics had not listened with a too easy credulity to whatever they had been told. At the time

of the Jubilee, George, the brother of David Garrick, purchased an ink-stand, and a pair of fringed gloves, said to have been worn by Shakspeare; but David's enthusiasm for Shakspeare was tempered by judgment, and he purchased nothing.

NOTE G.

MALONE has laboured to refute the whole of this account. His arguments may be reduced to two: 1st, the Sir Thomas Lucy alleged to have been Shakspeare's prosecutor, never had a park, it being universally acknowledged that there was none at Charlecote, and Fulbroke was not purchased by the family till the reign of James I.: no theft of deer, therefore, could have been made from Sir Thomas Lucy, it not being possible to produce an example of the keeping of deer in grounds not recognised as *parks*, in the legal meaning of that word; 2dly, such grounds only were protected by the common law, and by the fifth of Elizabeth, cap. 21.

Without the latter part of the first objection be as incontrovertibly true as the former, the argument avails nothing; for it is alleged that Shakspeare stole deer from *Sir Thomas Lucy*, not that he stole it either from *Charlecote* or *Fulbroke*. That no deer were ever kept in private grounds, because the practice was not so universal as to have forced itself into notice, is what cannot, in contradiction to probability, be conceded. Gentlemen of the 16th century would derive as much pleasure

from the preservation of a few head of deer in grounds contiguous to their dwellings, as we know they do in the present day. The passage quoted from Blackstone might have engendered a suspicion, even in the mind of Malone, that the practice was no novelty many years ago. "It is not every field or common which a gentleman chooses to surround with a wall or paling, and stock with a herd of deer, that is thereby constituted a legal park." As it is admitted that Sir Thomas Lucy had no *park*, in its legal sense, we will just review our authorities for believing, that he at least had deer, and, if that be proved, I care not where he kept them. The first evidence, in point of date, is that furnished by Malone himself, who quotes some notes made by Archdeacon Davies, to the manuscript notices of Mr. William Fulman, on the most eminent English poets. Davies died in 1707, and the papers of himself and Fulman are preserved in Corpus College, Oxon. Davies relates, that Shakspeare stole *venison* and *rabbits* from the knight. (Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 121-3.) Rowe's account has been given in the text. We next come to Jones of Tarbick, whose facts are nearly the same as Rowe's, with the added particular, that the offensive ballad was fixed on Sir Thomas' park gate, and such confirmation of the whole story as the repetition of the first stanza of the ballad alleged to have been written afforded. The value of Jones' evidence has been already estimated; it is only necessary here to show, that the stanza repeated by Jones has descended in an uncorrupted state. Jones recited the lines to an acquaintance, who committed them to writing, and a

relative of Jones' acquaintance communicated them to Oldys: from him the lines in the text are copied. Capel's account is this: Jones himself wrote down the stanza; this stanza was repeated from memory, by Capel's maternal grandfather, Mr. Thomas Wilkes, to Capel's father, who committed it to writing. The two copies of the stanza derived from the same source, but transmitted through different channels, agree precisely with each other. The story, thus authenticated, is surely conclusive as to Sir Thomas Lucy having had deer, and as to some of those deer having been purloined by Shakspeare. I have forborne to cite Chetwood, because his authority is suspicious; the stanzas he produces are not in the discovered song, with which, moreover, they are at variance in the mode of attack upon Sir Thomas Lucy, and the measure of verse in which they are constructed. It is not too much to believe of Chetwood, that presuming on the irrecoverable loss of all but the first stanza of the ballad, he forged what he thought an appropriate continuation of it. As to Malone's second objection, he partly answers it himself, admitting that Shakspeare might have been proceeded against by an action of trespass. He dismisses the supposition, however, of such having been the case, because it has never been alleged that any civil suit was instituted against Shakspeare on this ground. Rowe's account is much too loose and general to warrant a decision respecting the nature of the proceeding against Shakspeare, but he states positively enough, that the poet was prosecuted in consequence of his depredation on Sir Thomas Lucy's property; and, from all that appears, he

might as well have been prosecuted for the trespass as any thing else. But even allowing Malone to have succeeded in the interposition of a legal impossibility against the prosecution of the poet, does the whole story necessarily fall to the ground? Was prosecution the only evil to be apprehended from the anger of so powerful an enemy as Sir Thomas? certainly not; and this Malone well knew when he said, a few pages before, "if our author was so unfortunate as to offend him, he certainly could afterwards find no safe or comfortable abiding in his native town, where he could not escape the constant notice of his *prosecutor*." (Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 132.) The story then, on Malone's own statement, will stand well enough without the *prosecution*. And here let me ask, why the same licence of interpretation is not allowed to the words *prosecuted* and *prosecution*, in Rowe's narrative, as we are compelled to give to that of *prosecutor* in the sentence quoted from Malone? The word there can only be understood to mean *persecutor*, and no difficulty remains to contend with, if we read *persecuted* and *persecution* in Rowe's sentence.

The collateral proofs of the tradition are, that Sir Thomas Lucy was very active in the preservation of game, consequently an extremely likely man to act with severity against a depredator on his manor. It has always been believed that Sir Thomas Lucy was ridiculed under the portrait of Justice Shallow, who complains of Falstaff for beating his men, killing his deer, and breaking open his lodge. Sir Hugh Evans also plays upon the word *luc* in the same manner as the ballad does upon *Lucy*. Lucies are little fish, and the arms of the Lucy family "three lucies hariant."

NOTE H.

“ THOMAS GREENE, alias Shakspeare, was buried 6th March, 1589-90.” (Strat. Regist.) What the *alias*, in the Register, means, I do not know. If the Greens were related to any family of the name of Shakspeare I believe they were the connections of John, the shoemaker. In 1565 Philip Greene married *Ursula* Burbadge. *Ursula* will be remembered as the name of one of the shoemaker’s children. (Note D.) The shoemaker was security for Philip Greene in 1592. Though I express a doubt of the relationship of Green, the actor, to the Greens of Stratford, I am not ignorant of the four lines adduced as a proof of that relationship; they are quoted by Chetwood, from a play in which they do not exist. If the lines were genuine, they would certainly prove all that is required of them; but I am not so infatuated with Chetwood, as to assert the relationship between the Greens, in the text, on his authority alone, though I admit the extreme probability of the fact.

NOTE I.

I BELIEVE the text to be a fair representation of the truth. My rejection of the tale of Shakspeare having held horses at the play-house door follows of course, it being impossible that of two stories, so inconsistent with each other, both should be true. The narrative in the text is natural and consistent; the other abounds with

difficulty and improbability. There is yet another objection against it. Rowe knew the story, but omitted to insert it in his life of our author, which I agree with Steevens in believing he would not have done, had he thought it true. Its genealogy is respectable: had it merely rested on the authority of Cibber's Lives of the Poets, it would not have merited the notice it has received.

NOTE J.

THE materials made use of in the account here given of the theatre and theatrical usages of Shakspeare's time, are principally those collected by Malone, whose Historical Account of the English Stage is an invaluable repository of facts on the subject. In their arrangement, however, he was particularly unfortunate; for no principle of the difference of the importance of his collections guided him in dividing them between text and notes. I have concerned myself with his facts alone, and from them I have deduced my own conclusions. They are frequently at variance with those of my predecessor: that our coincidences are numerous, is attributable to the circumstance, that some facts speak too plainly to admit of diversity of opinions. Many matters in the text are not Malone's; for in a long indulgence of a predilection for the subject of theatrical history, I have sometimes gleaned trifles which appeared to have escaped him.

NOTE K.

THE Globe was a hexagonal wooden building. Henslow and Allen's contract for the building of the Fortune playhouse in 1599, gives us a pretty accurate idea of its dimensions; for that "Indenture" again and again insists on the Fortune being built, though somewhat larger, yet like the Globe. The contract for the Fortune stipulates for the erection of a building of four equal external sides of eighty feet, reduced by necessary arrangements to an internal area of fifty-five feet square. The length of the stage from side to side was to be forty-three feet, and in depth it was to extend over half the space of the internal area.

Three tiers of galleries occupied three sides of the house. The height of the first from the ground is not named. The second is stated at twelve feet above the lower tier; the third eleven feet from the second, and the height above the third, nine feet. There were four convenient rooms, or what are now called boxes, for the accommodation of gentlemen, partitioned off from the lower gallery; and other divisions, for company of an inferior order, in the upper. The lower galleries measured twelve feet and a half from the back to the front; the upper stories had an additional projection of ten inches.

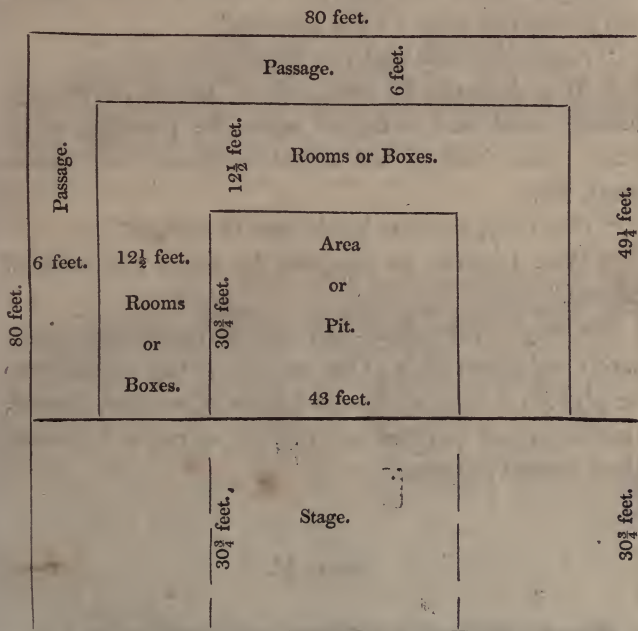
The space between the outward wall of the theatre and the front of the galleries was completely roofed in with thatch, as was likewise all that part of the theatre

occupied by the stage ; so that the stage, galleries, passages, and stair-cases, were entirely protected from the weather, whilst the open area, or pit, was exposed.

I do not profess to understand this document. It is, in fact, inconsistent with itself. A square of eighty feet every way, reduced on each side by galleries of twelve feet and a half, would certainly leave a square area of fifty-five feet on every side. But as the stage would necessarily occupy one side of the square, and the depth of the stage was to be exactly half of the remaining area, nothing like the area spoken of could be left open. Again, the length of the stage is expressly defined forty-three feet, which leaves it six feet too short at each side to form a junction with the ends of the galleries next the stage. I have no doubt, therefore, of an error in the document, which I take to be the omission to calculate the space occupied by the passages and stair-cases. A passage of six feet wide behind the galleries, added to their width, would make a deduction of eighteen feet and a half from each side of the theatre, and leave a space between the front of one gallery to the front of the other of forty-three feet, which is the exact width assigned to the stage.

The description of the ground plot of the house would then run thus : a square of eighty feet reduced on three sides by a passage of six feet, and a gallery of twelve feet and a half in breadth, leaving an area of forty-three feet wide, and sixty-one feet and a half long : the width of the area the width of the stage ; half the length of the area thirty feet and three quarters, the depth of the stage. To make myself better understood, a plan of this *con-*

jecture is sketched below. The height of the theatre was probably thirty-eight feet, allowing six feet for the height of the stage and undermost gallery, or row of boxes, which would, I suppose, be on a level with each other.



NOTE L.

A SCENE has been defined as “a painting in perspective, on a cloth fastened to a wooden frame or roller* ;” and the want of this simple contrivance at the public

* Malone.

theatres is singular, when the account books of the Revel Office prove, even to satiety, that the use of such paintings was an every day occurrence when plays were performed at Court.

“ One hundred and fifty ells of canvass for the houses and properties made for the players.”

“ A painted cloth and two frames.”

“ Wm. Lyzarde for syze, cullers, pottes, nayles, and pensills used and occupied upon the paynting of vii cities, one villadge, one countrey-house, one battlement, &c.”

“ One citty, and one battlement of canvas.”

“ Wm. Lyzarde for paynting by greate ccx yards of canvas.”

Six plays “ furnished, perfected and garnished necessarily and answerable to the matter, person and parte to be played; having apt howeses made of canvass, framed, fashioned, and paynted accordingly, as might best serve their several purposes.”

NOTE M.

Rowe's testimony is positive, and corroborated by the fact adduced for its illustration. Oldys' fact yields a similar inference; and then follows the testimony of Wright, which is perfectly clear also: “ Shakspeare was a much better poet than player.” (*Historia Histrionica.*) I cannot extract from Aubrey's account that Shakspeare “ did act exceedingly well,” any stronger meaning than that those parts which he did play he

played well: in favour of his being a first-rate actor, which has been contended for, it testifies nothing. As for the contemporary evidence of Chettle, so much relied on in support of the latter position, it is enough to say, that his address "to the Gentlemen Readers," is apologetical to Shakspeare; and apologies are so apt to be complimentary, that it will be long before their literal meaning will be received as authentic historical testimony.

NOTE N.

I MUST here enter a protest against Malone's unwarrantable conjectures. Oldys' story is this: "One of Shakspeare's younger brothers, who lived to a good old age, even some years, as I compute, after the restoration of King Charles the Second, would, in his younger days, come to visit his brother Will, as he called him, and be a spectator of him as an actor in some of his own plays." Oldys then mentions circumstances which leave no doubt that *As You Like It* was one of the plays seen, and Adam the character represented by Shakspeare.

Now for Malone's remarks. "Mr. Oldys seems to have studied the art of 'marring a plain tale in the telling of it.' From Shakspeare's not taking notice of any of his brothers or sisters in his will, except Joan Hart, I think it highly probable that they were all dead in 1616, except her. The truth is, that this account came originally from Mr. Jones of Tarbrick, who

related it from the information, not of one of Shakspeare's *brothers*, but of a *relation* of our poet, who lived to a good old age, and had seen him act in his youth. Mr. Jones' *informer* might have been Mr. Richard Quiney;" and a thousand other conjectures Malone adds. Now, every word of this is hypothesis, and most unwarrantable. Oldys says nothing about Jones; why then is the story referred to him, and, if justly to him, why is not his assertion that it was a *brother* of Shakspeare who saw him play Adam, to be believed? It is well ascertained that all Shakspeare's brothers and sisters were dead previous to 1616, except Joan and Gilbert. Gilbert, therefore, was the brother alluded to by Oldys. And what has Malone to say to this? Why, "I shall, in its proper place, show that the anecdote of one of Shakspeare's brothers having lived till after the restoration, is utterly impossible to be true." (Vol. ii. p. 141. note.) It is much to be regretted, that the "proper place" never occurred for the display of his overwhelming evidence. Till it is produced, let it be remembered that, as yet, nothing whatever is known of Gilbert Shakspeare, except that Oldys "computed" his existence to have extended to a period subsequent to the restoration.

NOTE O.

A FEW additional particulars of the history of New Place will not, perhaps, be unacceptable to the reader. The house was originally built by Sir Hugh Clopton,

in the time of Henry the Seventh, and was then "a fair house, built of brick and timber" (Dugdale), and continued in the Clopton family until 1563, when it was bought by William Bott, and re-sold in 1570 to William Underhill, Esq., of whom Shakspeare purchased it in 1597. On Shakspeare's death, New Place came to his daughter, Mrs. Hall; and then to her only child, Elizabeth Nash, afterwards Lady Barnard. In the house of Shakspeare, Mr. and Mrs. Nash enjoyed the remarkable distinction of entertaining Henrietta Maria, the wife of Charles the First, who, during the civil war in 1643, kept her court for three weeks in New Place. After Lady Barnard's death, in 1670, by a variety of changes, it reverted to the possession of the Clopton family, and Sir Hugh Clopton so completely modernized it, by internal and external alterations, as to confer on it the character of a new building altogether. In 1742, Macklin, Garrick, and Dr. Delaney, were entertained under Shakspeare's mulberry-tree by Sir Hugh. His son-in-law, Henry Talbot, Esq., sold New Place to the Rev. Francis Gastrell, vicar of Frodsham, in Cheshire. The mulberry-tree first became an object of dislike to its reverend possessor, because it subjected him to the frequent importunities of travellers, whose veneration for Shakspeare prompted them to visit it. In an evil hour he cut it down, and hewed it to pieces for firewood. The greater part, however, was purchased by Thomas Sharp, a watchmaker in Stratford, who turned it to wonderful advantage by converting every fragment into trifling articles of utility or ornament. A disagreement between Mr. Gastrell and the overseers of the

parish, respecting an assessment for the maintenance of the poor, fixed the final fate of New Place. In the heat of his anger, he declared, that that house should never be assessed again : in 1759, he pulled it down, and sold the materials. Here it is, with pleasure, added, that Mr. Gastrell left Stratford amidst the rage and execrations of the inhabitants. (Wheeler's Guide to, and History of, Stratford.)

NOTE P.

WHEN Shakspeare made his will, his wife was, at first, forgotten altogether, and only became entitled to her legacy under the benefit of an interlineation. To those in search of subjects for controversy, the temptation was irresistible. Malone acknowledges the bard's contempt for his wife, and, thinking it derogatory to his penetration not to be able to account for it, makes him jealous of her. Steevens, rightly enough, defends the lady, but forgetting, for once, his knowledge of life, appears quite unconscious that husbands, as well as wives, are occasionally false. The conversion of the bequest of an inferior piece of furniture into a mark of peculiar tenderness,

“ The very bed that on his bridal night
Received him to the arms of Belvidera,”

is not much in the usual style of this very knowing commentator.

NOTE Q.

SONNETS 33, 34, 35. 40-2. 120. It is natural that love and friendship should be the subjects of Shakspeare's Sonnets; and these Sonnets contain abundant evidence of the statements in the text. Perhaps other circumstances regarding the poet remain to be discovered; but hitherto most of the endeavours to trace the mind of Shakspeare in his Sonnets have been dreams and conjectures wilder and more absurd than the fancies of Warburton. The subject of the greater number of the Sonnets was, undoubtedly, a male friend of the poet, and Shakspeare's praise of the personal beauty and accomplishments of the favoured youth are far too ardent to be pleasing.* The hundred and twenty-sixth is the last stanza to the "lovely boy," and a transition is then made to the lady whose inconstancy to Shakspeare, and attachment to his bewitching friend, have been already noticed.

* Sonnets 18, 19, 20—32. 39. 43. 47.

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ESSAYS.

“ Yet must I not give Nature all ; thy art,
My gentle Shakspeare, must enjoy a part :—
For though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion.”

BEN JONSON.

KING JOHN.

 1596.*

IN the composition of his English historical plays, Shakspeare usually referred to the Chronicles of Holinshed for the facts necessary for his purpose. On the present occasion, however, he rested satisfied with the authority of an anonymous play, in two parts, printed in 1591. Its title is, "The troublesome Raigne of John King of England, with the Discoverie of King Richard Cordelion's base Sonne (vulgarly named the Bastard Fauconbridge): also, the Death of King John at Swinstead Abbey."

The various events of John's confused reign are ill calculated for dramatic representation, in

* Shakspeare's English historical plays are here considered chronologically. The principle adopted in the arrangement of the other dramas is that of the order of their composition; and I have acquiesced in Malone's hypothesis, except in the cases of the Merchant of Venice and Cymbeline.

which the want of a leading interest is imperfectly supplied by a mere collection of incidents. The great fault of the old play is, that it gives a very inadequate idea of what it professes to represent. If the reader be not previously acquainted with the history, he will in vain seek a knowledge of it from the progress of the scene. It is scarcely ever clear, for instance, whether the barons are in arms against the king in defence of their own liberties, or as the tools of Philip and partisans of Lewis, and thus the supporters of the cause of the pope. Throughout the play, indeed, John's disagreement with his nobility, and their extensive confederacy against him, for the protection of their independence, are kept too much out of sight; and of an event so important as the signature of Magna Charta, there is a total neglect. With almost implicit fidelity, Shakspeare copied the old play in its story and scenic arrangement of circumstances. He seldom corrects his author, but with him attributes the death of Richard the First to the Duke of Austria, and names that duke "Ly-moges." * Richard was, indeed, imprisoned on his return from Palestine, by Leopold Duke of Austria; but he met his death, several years

* Act III. sc. 1.

afterwards, from the hand of Bertrand de Gourdon, while besieging Vidomar, *vicount of Limoges*, in the castle of Chalus. Holinshed relates that Arthur was imprisoned in Falais, and afterwards at Rouen, and in this latter place he was supposed to be murdered: in the old play, Arthur is confined somewhere in England, and there Shakspeare also confines him.

Shakspeare has forcibly displayed the art, sophistry, insincerity, and ambition of the court of Rome; but it is singular that he has not, like the author of the old play, exhibited the depravity of the monastic orders, and the horrid tendency of papistical principles.

The same view is taken of John's character by Shakspeare, and by the anonymous author. In prosperity he is bold and insolent, and overbearing; in adversity, an abject coward;—weak in judgment, precipitate in action. With no views beyond the exigency of the moment, he eagerly attempts the accomplishing of his desires, unrestrained by religious awe, and unchecked by moral principle. Devoid of talent, he reaps not the benefit of his villainy: superior ability overreaches him; he succumbs to the power he insolently defies, and affectedly despises, and he is at once the object of hatred and contempt.

The old play makes John an usurper, and not, as represented by Holinshed, the legal possessor of the throne under the dying testament of his predecessor, and brother, Richard. It was the object of both the dramatists to excite pity in favour of Arthur, and they, therefore, judiciously suppressed the facts recorded by Holinshed, that the nobility "willingly took their oaths of obedience" to John, and that the pretensions of his nephew were at one time so little insisted upon, that "a peace was concluded upon betwixt King John and Duke Arthur."

The most celebrated, and, indeed, the best scene in Shakspeare's play, is that in which the tyrant insinuates to Hubert his wishes for the death of Arthur: its whole merit is Shakspeare's, the bare hint for such an interview in the original play being comprised in the following lines :

"Hubert de Burgh, take Arthur here to thee,
 Be he thy prisoner : Hubert, keep him safe,
 For on his life doth hang thy sovereign's crown,
 But in his death consists thy sovereign's bliss :
 Then, Hubert, as thou shortly hear'st from me,
 So use the prisoner I have given in charge."

The sequel to this scene, Hubert's explanation to John that Arthur had not been sacrificed, is generally illustrative of Shakspeare's method of

treating his predecessor's composition.* The beautiful passage descriptive of the general and deep sensation excited by the report of the death of Arthur is entirely Shakspeare's, as are, also, John's ungrateful reflections on Hubert's supposed obedience to his command.†

The remainder of the scene is inimitably amplified from the following passage of the old play :

“ Art thou there, villain? Furies haunt thee still,
For killing him whom all the world laments.

Hub. Why, here's, my lord, your highnes hand and seal,

Charging, on life's regard, to do the deed.

John. Ah, dull, conceited peasant, know'st thou not
It was a damned execrable deed?

Shew'st me a seal? Oh, villain, both our souls

Have sold their freedom to the thrall of hell

Under the warrant of that cursed seal.

Hence, villain, hang thyself, and say in hell

That I am coming for a kingdom there.”

Shakspeare's representation of John suffering under poison, and desiring winter and the bleak winds of the north to cool his internal heat, is a circumstance borrowed from the old play: how eloquently he has amplified the idea of his predecessor, requires not to be pointed out.

* Act IV. sc. 2. .

† “ It is the curse of kings to be attended
By slaves,” &c.

“ Philip, some drink ; oh ! for the frozen Alps,
 To tumble on and cool this inward heat
 That rageth as the furnace seven-fold hot.”

Few scenes of deeper pathos occur in Shakspeare than the triumph of humanity over sternness in the breast of Hubert, and the glory is due to Shakspeare only.

The pleadings of Arthur, in the old play, are the reasonings of an adult, harsh, quaint, and cold. Shakspeare has converted the young man into a child, and artfully invested his supplications with the beautiful simplicity of infantine innocence. One specimen of the style of the old play will be sufficient.

“ Then do thy charge, and charged be thy soul
 With wrongful persecution done this day.
 Yon rowling eyes, whose superficies yet
 I do behold with eyes that nature lent :
 Send forth the terror of your mover’s frown,
 To wreak my wrong upon the murtherers
 That rob me of your fair reflecting view :
 Let hell to them (as earth they wish to me)
 Be dark and direful guerdon for their guilt,
 And let the black tormentors of deep Tartary
 Upbraid them with this damned enterprise,
 Inflicting change of tortures on their souls.
 Delay not, Hubert, my orisons are ended,
 Begin, I pray thee, reave me of my sight :
 But to perform a tragedy indeed,
 Conclude the period with a mortal stab.
 Constance, farewell, tormentor come away,
 Make my dispatch the tyrant’s feasting day.”

Hubert. I faint, I fear, my conscience bids desist:
 Faint did I say? fear was it that I nam'd?
 My king commands, that warrant sets me free:
 But God forbids, and he commandeth kings,
 That great Commander counterchecks my charge,
 He stays my hand, he maketh soft my heart,
 Go, cursed tools, your office is exempt:
 Cheer thee, young lord, thou shalt not lose any eye,
 Though I should purchase it with loss of life.
 I'll to the king, and say his will is done,
 And of the langour tell him thou art dead;
 Go in with me, for Hubert was not born
 To blind those lamps that nature polish'd so."

From Arthur we naturally turn to his mother, the Lady Constance, who makes a far less prominent and alluring figure in history than on the stage. The tragic muse has not described her as the widow of Gefferey, the divorced wife of the earl of Chester, and the actual consort of a third husband, Guie de Tours, but has represented the only beautiful feature in her character — maternal tenderness, — and super-added the "*widow's* plaint, that issues from a wounded soul."* In Shakspeare, also, she is

"sick and capable of fears,
 Oppress'd with wrongs, and therefore full of fears;
 A *widow, husbandless*, subject to fears."†

The maternal distress of Constance, in the old play, is clamorous and passionate, vindictive

* Old play.

† Act III. sc. 1.

and contumelious. The hand of Shakspeare tempered her rage into vehemence, attuned her clamour to eloquence, and (for the most part) modulated her coarse vindictiveness into a deep sense of gross injuries and undeserved misfortunes. For those passages in her character most worthy of admiration, Shakspeare drew chiefly from his own resources. Of her eloquent rejoinder to the prayer of Arthur that she would be "content*," not a trace is to be met with in the original, nor of that noble burst of passion,

"I will instruct my sorrows to be proud;
 For grief is proud, and makes its owner stoop.
 To me, and to the state of my great grief,
 Let kings assemble; for my grief's so great,
 That no supporter but the huge firm earth
 Can hold it up; here I and sorrows sit;
 Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it."

Equally free from obligation, also, in the same scene, is Constance's designation of the nuptial day of Blanch and Lewis, and her animated exposure of the perfidy of Philip and Austria.

The entrance of Constance, in the fourth scene of the third act, is prefaced, in the old play, by Philip's observation:

"To aggravate the measure of our grief,
 All mal-content comes Constance for her son."

* Act III. sc. 1.

Be brief, good madam, for your face imports
 A tragick tale behind that's yet untold.
 Her passions stop the organ of her voice,
 Deep sorrow throbbeth mis-befall'n events ;
 Out with it lady, that our act may end
 A full catastrophe of sad laments."

Shakspeare substituted the following vivid picture :

" Look, who comes here! a grave unto a soul ;
 Holding the eternal spirit, against her will,
 In the vile prison of afflicted breath :"—

The whole of the part is Shakspeare's from the striking apostrophe to death*, to Constance's beautiful detail of her inducements for doating upon grief.† This is the last scene of her appearance.

The bold admixture of broad humour, sarcastic bitterness, and playful levity, in a plain, blunt, and unpretending Englishman, was first sketched in the "Troublesome Raigne." The character is not wrought with the care, nor pointed with the emphasis, that mark the Faulconbridge of Shakspeare, yet it is delineated with much discrimination and vigour.

* " Death, death :—O amiable, lovely death !
 Arise forth from the couch of lasting night," &c.
 Act III. sc. 4.

† " Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
 Lies in his bed," &c.

“ Then, Robin Faulconbridge, I wish thee joy,
 My sire a king, and I a landless boy.
 God’s lady-mother, the world is in my debt,
 There’s something owing to Plantagenet.
 Aye marry, sir, let me alone for game,
 I’ll act some wonders now I know my name.
 By blessed Mary, I’ll not sell that pride
 For England’s wealth and all the world beside.
 Sit fast the proudest of my father’s foes,
 Away, good mother, there the comfort goes.”

Though Shakspeare has not actually imitated this spirited passage, it undoubtedly influenced him when he composed the conclusion of his first act. Faulconbridge’s defiance of Austria, in the old play, is dull and tedious :

“ What words are these ? How do my sinews shake ?
 My father’s foe clad in my father’s spoil ;
 A thousand furies kindle with revenge,
 This heart, that choler keeps a consistory,
 Searing my inwards with a brand of hate :
 How doth Alecto whisper in mine ears ?
 Delay not, Philip, kill the villain straight,
 Disrobe him of the matchless monument,
 Thy father’s triumph o’er the savages ;
 Base heardgroom, coward, peasant, worse than a
 threshing slave,
 What mak’st thou with the trophie of a king ?
 Sham’st thou not, coistril, loathsome dunghill swad,
 To grace thy carcase with an ornament
 Too precious for a monarch’s coverture ?
 Scarce can I temper due obedience
 Unto the presence of my sovereign,
 From acting outrage on this trunk of hate :
 But arm thee, traitor, wronger of renown,

For by his soul I swear, my father's soul,
 Twice will I not review the morning's rise,
 'Till I have torn that trophie from thy back,
 And split thy heart for wearing it so long.
 Philip hath sworn, and if it be not done,
 Let not the world repute me Richard's son."

But in Shakspeare, with what spirit and conciseness is it said—

Austria. ———— "What the devil art thou?
Falcon. "One that will play the devil, sir, with you,
 An 'a may catch your hide and you alone.
 You are the hare of whom the proverb goes,
 Whose valour plucks dead lions by the beard;
 I'll smoke your skin-coat, an I catch you right;
 Sirrah, look to't; i'faith, I will, i'faith."

Act II. sc. 1.

Faulconbridge's keen reflections on the universal sway of interest in every transaction of life*, is entirely Shakspeare's, as is the fine strain of humour with which Austria is taunted through the first scene of the third act. Shakspeare has nobly elevated the Bastard by his feeling and manly conduct when Hubert is accused of the murder of Arthur†, and by assigning him some of the most animated sentences in the play. Of his appeal to the courage, pride, and glory of John‡; his bold defiance of Lewis§; and his affectionate lament over

* Act II. sc. 2.

† Act IV. sc. 3.

‡ Act V. sc. 1. "But wherefore do you droop," &c.

§ Act V. sc. 2. "Now hear our English king."

the dead body of the king, there are no traces in the original play.

The singular inattention of Shakspeare to a highly poetic passage in the old King John, demands its quotation here. It is the imprecation of the Bastard on Austria, whom he had in vain pursued in the field of battle.

“ And art thou gone ! misfortune haunt thy steps,
And chill cold fear assail thy times of rest.
Morpheus, leave here thy silent ebon cave ;
Besiege his thoughts with dismal fantasies,
And ghastly objects of pale threatening maws.
Affright him every minute with stern looks,
Let shadow temper terror in his thoughts,
And let the terror make the coward mad,
And in his madness let him fear pursuit,
And so in frenzy let the peasant die.”

Shakspeare is the author of the best passages in John, Arthur, Constance and Faulconbridge, though the stamp of each character remains unaltered from what he found it. He did not act fairly by himself: he adopted the plot of his predecessor in all its details, and his characters in their several groupings, and thus circumscribed his own power of improvement.

RICHARD II.

1593.

THE action of the present play commences in 1398, when Richard had attained his thirty-second year, and closes with his death in 1400. Holinshed furnished the facts which the poet dramatised; and, with the exception of a few minor points, which require notice, Shakspeare adhered with considerable exactness to his authority. He is inaccurate, for instance, in his statement of the circumstances under which the first interview between Richard and Bolingbroke took place: he entirely passes over the meeting of Richard and Northumberland at Conway Castle, where the king was entrapped into the power of the wily earl. From that moment Richard was a king only in name. He did not meet Bolingbroke at Flint with the freedom which Shakspeare represents, for he was forcibly carried thither: that castle was surrounded with the soldiers of his enemy; and though the duke

of Lancaster thrice bowed his knee in reverence to his "sovereign lord and king," Richard was then actually a prisoner, and conveyed to London, without being "permitted once to change his apparel, but rodé still through all the towns simply clothed in one suit of raiment." * The poet is further incorrect in representing Bolingbroke ignorant of Richard's sojourn in Flint, he "being still advertised, from hour to hour, by posts, how the earl of Northumberland sped." † The disclosures of Bagot, and his accusation of Aumerle, took place in the parliament summoned, under new writs, in the name of Henry the Fourth, and not in the parliament that confirmed and proclaimed the deposition of Richard, on the last day of September, 1399. The introduction of the bishop of Carlisle's celebrated speech, in the same scene, is a similar anticipation of an occurrence in the parliament of Henry. Shakspeare has pushed the bishop's argument against the incompetency of the tribunal which deposed Richard, into a broad assertion of the divine right of kings: Carlisle's more solid objection against the condemnation of his sovereign, without giving him an opportunity to answer the charges made against him,

* Holinshed.

† Ibid.

has been skilfully converted into a pretext for Richard's appearance in Westminster Hall, there to resign the crown in person, instead of making his resignation by the signature of a legal instrument.

The short period of Richard's reign embraced in the action of the drama, is too barren of events of a dramatic nature to furnish materials for a pleasing play, and Shakspeare made one effort to remedy the defect. Richard married his second wife, Isabell, daughter of the king of France, then in the ninth year of her age, in 1596. On the deposition of her husband, therefore, she was only twelve, and consequently by no means the prototype of Shakspeare's queen, whose acts, words, and thoughts, bespeak the woman of maturity. If the author's intention in this change was the communication of interest and pathos to his scenes, he has violated the truth of history in vain. The part of the queen is altogether feebly written; and the interview of separation between her and her wretched husband remarkable for its poverty and tameness.

Richard is the only person in the play whose qualities Shakspeare has formed into a dramatic character. The king was not deficient in natural talent, but his education had been neg-

lected, and his easy temper early resigned him into the hands of designing sycophants, who, intent on their own ambitious projects, flattered his vanity and pampered his passions, regardless of their country's welfare or their sovereign's honour. Neglecting public duties, he was a votary of pleasure; his court was a scene of perpetual revelry, and the splendour of his retinue, and the magnificence of his mode of living, surpassed all the previous splendour of the crown of England. The people, on whom the support of these expensive pleasures fell, murmured, and the king was impatient of opposition: mutual dissatisfaction and, subsequently, hatred ensued, and his reign was passed amidst the dangerous contentions of parties endeavouring one to establish, and the other to circumscribe, the inordinate power which he claimed as his prerogative.

To avoid all mention of the bad features of his hero's character was impossible; but the dramatist touched them with a lenient hand. He found Richard a voluptuary, a tyrant, and a desponding coward: but by commencing his play within two years of Richard's deposition, he sunk twenty of violence, rapacity, and tyranny.

Shakspeare judiciously selected the banishment of Hereford, and the seizure of Gaunt's

wealth, as instances of Richard's despotism and rapacity, for both those events are intimately connected with the subsequent action of the play. This inadequate tribute having been paid to truth, the reverse of the picture is heightened by the most strenuous exertion of the poet's skill. Bold and various imagery, pious, philosophical, and sublime reflection, and all the graces of impassioned eloquence, are lavished on Richard. If he had manfully braved the buffets of calamity, and become a prey to sorrows, subdued only by the might of their accumulation, the struggle would have been awful. But as he pusillanimously yielded to despair, our sympathy is but slight, and Richard is upbraided and forgotten. Holinshed relates, that under his misfortunes, Richard was "almost consumed with sorrow, and in a manner half dead." Such is the historian's slight mention of the king's character in the hour of adversity; and this brief notice has been expanded by the magic genius of Shakspeare into a perfect picture of intellectual cowardice. He who was at one moment self-confident, nothing doubting, comparing his power to that of the sun itself, was in the next plunged in the deepest despair, willing to resign his crown when he heard that some of his liege men had fallen off.

Notwithstanding all the pains bestowed on the delineation of the king, and the success with which those pains were followed, a heavy drama is still the result. With but one character that can be deemed a dramatic portrait, with a plot advanced as much by narrative as by action, and with a dialogue distributed into speeches of a length far exceeding the importance of their contents, Richard the Second, though an exquisite poem, is an indifferent play : it is deficient in variety and contrast of character, a quick succession of incidents, and an animated and interesting dialogue.

HENRY IV. AND HENRY V.

First Part of Henry IV., 1597.

Second Part of Henry IV. and Henry V., 1599.

THESE three plays owe their origin to the same sources, the Chronicles of Holinshed, and an anonymous play, exhibited long before Shakspeare became a writer for the stage, entitled, "The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth. Containing the Honourable Battell of Agincourt."

The action of the First Part of Henry the Fourth begins immediately after the defeat of the Scots at Holmidon in 1402, the second year of Henry's reign, and terminates with the death of Hotspur about ten months afterwards. The news of this event commences the Second Part of the dramatised history; the death of Henry, and the coronation of his successor in 1413, form its close.

Henry the Fifth opens with the proceedings of the parliament held at Leicester in 1414, and rapidly glancing over the events of six years, exhibits, in conclusion, the marriage of Henry

with Katharine of France in 1420. The series of plays comprises the history of eighteen years.

“The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth” contains no allusion to the intestine broils which disturbed the peace of his predecessor; Shakspeare, therefore, derived no assistance whatever from that source in arranging the civil feuds of the fourth Harry’s reign for dramatic representation, and he adopted few hints for the conduct of the wars of the conqueror of France. The historical events of the three plays were epitomised from Holinshed by Shakspeare himself, with few peculiarities of arrangement requiring any formal notice.

The life of Henry the Fifth, after his accession to the throne, is little more than a history of battles and sieges in a foreign land; the action of the play which bears his name is, therefore, principally laid in France. In opening with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s arguments against the applicability of the Salique law to France, a deference is paid to the author of “The Famous Victories,” but Holinshed taught Shakspeare to talk much more learnedly on the subject than his predecessor. The same historian also instructed the poet to transfer the Earl of Westmoreland’s recommendation to subdue Scotland before France was invaded, from the Bishop,

who offers it in the old play, to its rightful owner. *

In the early scenes of Henry the Fifth the Dauphin appears an active agent, but silently disappears towards the conclusion of the fourth act, though many of the subsequent scenes are in the very court of France. History explains what Shakspeare has neglected to account for. "Shortly after (the battle of Agincourt,) either for melancholy that he had for the loss, or by some sudden disease, Lewis Dolphin of Viennois, heir-apparent to the French king, *departed this life* without issue."

Shakspeare would have had no reluctance to continue the character of the Dauphin on the scene, without at all noticing that the person represented was no longer the same †, had the

* Act I. sc. 2.

† In Henry the Eighth, the Duke of Norfolk appears in the first scene of the play, and again in the second scene of the third act: historically speaking, two different persons are represented in these different appearances; dramatically they are the same. As Shakspeare here made two persons into one, so, on the contrary, he has made one person into two. The Earl of Surrey, in the third act, is the nobleman who married the Duke of Buckingham's daughter. But Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, who married the Duke of Buckingham's daughter, was Duke of Norfolk at the time Wolsey was called upon to deliver up the seals, and is represented by Shakspeare in this very scene (Act III. sc. 2.)

succeeding Dauphin acquiesced in the line of politics which then actuated the French court. But justly indignant, as next heir to the throne, at the disgraceful treaty which was for ever to exclude him from the regal seat, he asserted, by arms, his right against the king of England's claim. Shakspeare's silence is judicious: the mention of the death of the first Dauphin was unnecessary, and, unanimity being a great object in the concluding scenes of the drama, all notice of the second Dauphin's dissent from the treaty of Troyes, which led to a series of bloody wars, would have been improper.

Shakspeare's discretion may also be remembered in neglecting to notice another circumstance in the history of the French court. The king, says Holinshed, was occasionally "frantick:" the direction of the government, therefore, was alternately in the hands of the king and the Dauphin; but as such changes, though agreeable to the truth of history, would have occasioned unnecessary perplexity on the stage, the king is continued in authority throughout the play.

In reading Holinshed for these plays, the

as making that demand: so that Shakspeare in one scene exhibits the same person under two forms. (Vide Read's Note, Malone's Shak. vol. xix. p. 419.)

poet's eye was eager in quest of scattered hints of personal character, and on these, whenever he was fortunate enough to meet with them, his exuberant imagination worked with boldness. His Henry the Fourth admirably exemplifies the prudence, moderation, and dignity which characterised that monarch in his latter days, wherein, says Holinshed, "he shewed himself so gentle, that he got more love amongst the nobles and people of this realm than he had purchased malice and evil-will in the beginning."

Shakspeare pays a just tribute to the amiable Scroop by the transfusion of the historian's honourable mention of him into elegant verse.* "The respect that men had to the Archbishop, caused them to think the better of the cause, since the gravity of his age, his integrity of life, and incomparable learning, with the reverend aspect of his amiable personage, moved all men to have him in no small estimation."

"Irregular and wild" are epithets applied by the dramatist, with inimitable propriety, to Glendower's desultory warfare and serious pretensions to the power of a magician. Shakspeare does not make him speak at random in boasting the marvellous occurrences attendant on his birth, for Holinshed bears testimony to the pro-

* Henry IV. pt. 2. Act I. sc. 1.

digies, and to Owen's skill in magic also. How extraordinarily versatile were Shakspeare's powers! Witchcraft and magic, by which, on other occasions, he produces impressions the most imposing, in Henry the Fourth are held up to scorn by the lights of argument and satire!*

Percy, a gem distinguishable by its brilliancy in the constellation of characters which adorn the scenes of Henry the Fourth, is the creation of the poet. Something, indeed, of his boldness was caught from the historian, but Holinshed's hero could never abstract his mind from present realities, and think it were an easy leap to pluck bright honor from the pale-faced moon, and wish that danger swept from the east to the west, so that honor crossed it from the north to the south; nor could the dull chronicler have fancied a battle so fiercely waged, that the observant river, affrighted with the bloody looks of the combatants,

"Ran fearfully among the trembling reeds,
And hid his crisp head in the hollow bank."

This most splendid picture in the drama of chivalric daring could be conceived only by a contemporary of Spenser and Sidney. But Shakspeare, always regardful of nature, has de-

* Part I. Act III. sc. 1.

fined and marked him amidst all his fellows of knighthood. Percy is as remarkable for his irritability and impetuosity as for his grand and lofty daring: his calm straight forward sense is as striking as his high poetic spirit; and not satisfied with all these various qualities, Shakspeare has added to his character a vein of dry sarcastic humour.

For the idea of bringing Henry the Fifth on the stage in the twofold character of a dissolute young man* and a hero, Shakspeare was indebted to the anonymous play already mentioned, where the prince figures as a low, blaspheming reprobate, at the head of a gang of ruffians, who obtain means for the indulgence of their licentious extravagance by plunder. The scene of a robbery which they commit, on the *king's receivers*, is *Gadshill*, and the injured parties are bullied into silence. The prince and his associates retire to a tavern in *Eastcheap*, to carouse upon the spoil; a riot of intoxication follows, and Henry is committed to the Counter. In the mean time, a second robbery is perpetrated on a poor *carrier*, by one of the prince's servants, who is detected and brought to trial. His royal master then rescues him from the hands of

* Note A.

justice, and commits a violent assault upon the judge. The prince is a second time consigned to prison ; an interview with his father succeeds ; admonition makes a due impression, and the parent and son are reconciled. The prince's next appearance is at the death-bed of the old king, who is discovered sleeping. Young Henry removes the crown from his father's head, and answers the rebuke of his fault with such affection, that the dying king, with his own hand, consigns to his son the symbol of sovereignty. Seated on the throne, Henry the Fifth disclaims, and banishes, the companions of his looser hours, and henceforth devotes himself to the acquisition of a glorious name in arms.

Shakspeare has done ample justice to the conception of his predecessor, by copying the leading feature of his plot ; but though he adopted the incidents of the old play, he was not content to receive Henry's character from the same authority. He had recourse to the historians, and from them delineated his portrait of the prince, who was, indeed, says Holinshed, " youthfully given, grown to audacity, and had chosen his companions agreeable to his age ; with whom he spent the time in such recreations, exercises, and delights, as he fancied. But yet his behaviour was not offensive, or at least tend-

ing to the danger of anybody; sith he had a care to avoid doing wrong, and to tender his affections within the tract of virtue, whereby he opened unto himself a ready passage of good liking among the prudent sort, and was well beloved of such as could discern his disposition, which was in no degree so excessive, as that he deserved in such vehement manner to be suspected. In whose dispraise I find little, but to his praise very much.”

‘The effect of this favourable testimony of Holinshed is perceptible throughout the poet’s delineation of the prince. The reformation of Henry resulted from the sterling worth of his character; and Shakspeare has judiciously contrived that, amidst all his follies, his mental superiority should never be lost sight of. His first appearance is in the company of the vicious and unprincipled; yet he quits not the scene without making it evident, that his heart is uncontaminated by their association, and that he was prepared, whenever his honour or dignity demanded the sacrifice, to disengage himself from companions, to whose vices he was no more blind than to the charms of their exhaustless humour; thus, in his conduct, emulating (as he says, with some little vanity) the glory of the sun, —

“ Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
 To smother up his beauty from the world,
 That, when he please again to be himself,
 Being wanted, he may be more wonder'd at,
 By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
 Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.” *

The robbery committed by the prince in the old play, is an act of the grossest profligacy. Tenacious of the character of his hero, Shakespeare conformed the conduct of Henry to the account he met with of it in Stowe, who gives to the whole transaction the air of a harmless and agreeable jest.

“ He lived somewhat insolently, insomuch, that being accompanied with some of his young lords and gentlemen, he would wait in disguised array for his own receivers, and distress them of their money; and sometimes at such enterprises both he and his company were sorely beaten. And when his receivers made to him their complaints how they were robbed in coming unto him, he would give them discharge of so much money as they had lost. And besides that, they should not depart from him without great rewards for their trouble and vexation.”

“ Who, I rob? I a thief? Not I, by my faith,” is the natural reply of the dramatic Hal, unac-

* Act. I. sc. 2.

customed to participate in such lawless courses, to Falstaff's proposition to make one of the plundering party to Gadshill. He consents, indeed, on this occasion, to become "a mad-cap," but, for what? Simply for a frolic, which "would be argument for a week, laughter for a month, and a good jest for ever." The affair is in all parts free from the slightest suspicion of dishonour. Henry sees not the parties who are robbed; yet he more than compensates the injury he incautiously sanctions by his presence. "The money shall be paid back again with advantage." *

When Shakspeare represents the parties robbed at Gadshill as public officers, carrying money to the exchequer, he conforms both to Stowe and the old play. But he abandons this story when he introduces the sheriff seeking Falstaff, to answer the charge of having plundered a carrier. † A reference to the old play explains the contradiction, by exposing its origin. Two independent thefts, as I have already noticed, are there committed, one by the prince on the "king's receivers," the other on "a poor carrier" by Gadshill, the prince's servant, who is brought to trial for the offence. Shakspeare confounded

* Act II. sc. 4.

† Ibid.

the two occurrences, and thus involved himself in inconsistency.

In accompanying the plunderers of each play from the exploit in Kent, to the tavern in Eastcheap, every reader will be struck by the dissimilarity of their recreations. With what pleasurable sensations is the scene of Falstaff's recital of his prodigies of valour recalled; and what high commendations are due to Shakspeare for his substitution of this exquisite piece of comedy, for a scene in which "came the young prince, and three or four more of his companions, and called for wine good store; and then they sent for a noyse of musicians, and were very merry for the space of an hour; then whether their music liked them not, or whether they had drunke too much wine or no, I cannot tell; but our pots flew against the walls, and then they drew their swords, and went into the street and fought; and some took one part, and some took another*:" but enough of such trash.

Prince Henry's assault upon the judge is, by the anonymous dramatist, actually exhibited on the stage. Shakspeare cautiously avoided giving prominence to so disgusting an act of violence, influenced, doubtless, by the example of

* "The Famous Victories," &c.

Holinshed, who defers the notice of this occurrence to the commencement of Henry the Fifth's reign, and accompanies the mention of it with circumstances reflecting the highest credit on the king. "He banished his former companions from his presence, and in their places chose men of gravity, wit, and high policy, by whose wise council he might at all times rule to his honour and dignity; calling to mind how once to high offence of the king his father, he had with his fist stricken the chief justice, for sending one of his minions (upon desert) to prison, when the justice stoutly commanded himself also straight to ward, and he (then prince) obeyed." Shakspeare, in like manner, delays the mention of the circumstance, till after his hero had become king; his allusion to it then is equally as slight as the historian's, and, like his, coupled with the palliation of the prince's ready obedience to the representative of his father. Shakspeare, however, still kept the old play in his recollection. Henry there appoints the lord chief justice "protector." As the bard merely confirms the judge in his office, the breach of propriety is not so flagrant; but historical truth is in both cases equally violated, for Sir William Gascoigne, the judge in question, died before Henry ascended the throne.

Shakspeare's delineation of Henry, from his first appearance, as a youth who was hurried into, but not attached to, dissoluteness, freed him from the embarrassment of the abrupt and unnatural reformation of the depraved hero of the "famous victories," whose vulgar violence, and want of filial reverence, are exemplified in his rudely forcing himself, and a rabble of followers, into the royal palace. The prince is alone admitted to the presence, and here the picture is suddenly reversed : by a dozen lines of parental admonition the reprobate is converted to penitence and piety!

Of the interview represented in the second scene of the third act, between the prince and his father, Holinshed gives rather a long account, and the old play accords with the historian in many minute particulars. Shakspeare cannot be said to follow either ; he adopts the incident as a simple fact, and treats it in an independent manner. The king's part in the dialogue is inimitably sustained ; his gradual transition from the censure of his son's conduct, to a contrast of it with his own, when young, is executed with a grace equal to its propriety ; as is also his eulogy on Percy, a theme, above all others, calculated to rouse the dormant energies, and develope the latent virtues of the prince.

Both Holinshed and the old play contain the incidents employed in the construction of the death-bed scene of Henry the Fourth; but its thoughts and their beautiful expression are Shakspeare's own, with the exception of two passages. Shakspeare says,

“ Let there be no noise made, my gentle friends ;
 Unless some dull and favourable hand
 Will whisper musick to my weary spirit.”

The circumstance (not the poetry of these lines) is in the old play: “ cause some musick to rock me asleep.”

Hen. “ How I came by the crown, O God, forgive !
 • And grant it may with thee in true peace live.

P. Hen. My gracious liege,
 You won it, wore it, kept it, gave it me ;
 Then plain and right must my possession be,
 Which I with more than with a common pain
 'Gainst all the world will rightfully maintain.”

Words almost similar to these of Shakspeare are found in the anonymous play, and in Holinshed.

Holinshed and the two dramatists distinguish Henry the Fifth on the throne by the same circumstances; the renunciation of his former companions, and his martial exploits on the plains of France. The leading features of the momentous contest which ensued are common to both plays; but not even the ingenuity of

Shakspeare could extract from the coarseness and vulgarity of his predecessor, one hint of princely dignity, or one gleam of elevated thought, to adorn the hero of the scene. It is the fire of Shakspeare illuminating the cold narrative of Holinshed, that exalts the king to the proud and towering eminence which he now maintains. But if the abject poverty of the old play afforded no aid to the poet in his flight, it unhappily possessed scenes which he was too fatally seduced to emulate. How zealously he emulated his predecessor, the comparison of Henry's love scene *, with an extract from a parallel passage in the old play, will abundantly testify.

Hen. “ But tell me, sweet Kate, can'st thou tell how to love?

Kate. I cannot hate, my good lord,
Therefore far unfit were it for me to love.

Hen. Tush, Kate; but tell me in plain terms,
Canst thou love the king of England?
I cannot do as these countries do,
That spend half their time in wooing:
Tush, wench, I am none such.
But wilt thou go over to England?

Kate. I would to God that I had your Majesty
As fast in love, as you have my father in wars.”

Holinshed relates, that Henry in youth,
“ made himself a companion unto misruly mates

* Henry V. Act V. sc. 2.

of dissolute order and life ;” and the old play associates him with “ Ned, Tom, Sir John Oldcastle, and Gadshill,” whose claims to the notice of the heir apparent are depravity and vulgarity. Falstaff and Poins, Bardolph and Peto, are the substitutes for these disgusting reprobates. Shakspeare has not done much towards the reformation of their morals ; but he endued Henry’s companions with qualities which palliate, though they cannot justify, his choice.

So highly finished a gallant as Henry could not be insensible to the merits of Poins. The prince’s “ legs and his are both of a bigness, and he plays at quoits well ; and eats conger and fennel ; and drinks off candles’ ends for flap dragons ; and rides the wild mare with the boys ; and jumps upon joint stools ; and swears with a good grace ; and wears his boot very smooth, like unto the sign of the leg ; and breeds no bate with telling of discreet stories ; and such other gambol faculties he hath, that show a weak mind and an able body, for the which the prince admits him ; for the prince himself is such another ; the weight of a hair will turn the scales between their avoirdupois.” * Poins acquired his surname Ned from the old play, which

* Henry IV. Part II. Act II. sc. 4.

is to be reckoned as his only obligation to that source.

Mirth and Falstaff are inseparable, but it is to be regretted, that Shakspeare should have alloyed his inimitable wit with so large a portion of depravity. If sensuality and profaneness be the abstracts of wickedness, Falstaff is a perfect epitome of vice. It is enough to refer to his wanton allusions to Scripture, which he quotes even to "damnable iteration;" and it is unnecessary to dwell on the obscenity and grossness absolutely interwoven with the character. Falstaff's unwieldy carcase is very comical, but a corporeal infirmity is a sorry subject for a jest, destined to last through two entire plays.

More legitimate sources of pleasure are the brilliant qualities of Falstaff's understanding; and those ludicrous, but not disgusting traits of character displayed in the comic situations in which he figures. An unhappy propensity to exaggeration, and the assumption of a valour which his heart disowns, naturally lead to the exposure of his cowardice; and irretrievable disgrace apparently awaits him. But with the love of boasting, Falstaff was endowed with an ingenuity matchless in evasion; a confidence impenetrable to exposure; and a disposition so happy and easy, that no accident can ruffle its serenity.

Every object is reflected on his mind by the eye of cheerfulness, and his whole mental composition exhibits an absolute ineptitude to pain. To a disposition so happy, Falstaff unites a fancy rich in an infinite variety of imagery, which, with the facility of will, his ingenuity weaves into the most ludicrous combinations. The jest is ever ready on his lips; his thoughts are jests; and his brilliant wit pours them forth with peculiar happiness of expression, in the uninterrupted course of casual conversation. The harmonious union of the various qualities of Falstaff, is perhaps the secret of that charm, which has constituted the knight a continual and universal favourite.

Falstaff is particularly rich in humour in the first part of Henry the Fourth. In the early scenes of the second part he is a little in the back ground*, especially with my Lord Chief Justice; but he resumes his wonted splendour in the company of Shallow and Silence. The caricature of the Justice, the remarks on the "semblable coherence" of Shallow and his servants, and the eulogy on wine, are not inferior to any former displays of his comic powers.†

* Act I. sc. 2. Act II. sc. 1.

† Act IV. sc. 3.

The dismissal of Falstaff, as one of Henry's dissolute companions, is conformable to Holinshed and the old play; but his commitment to the Fleet is an act of severity volunteered by Shakspeare. If the knight's imprisonment, when he looked for an appointment of honour and emolument, was used as a means of mirth, the effort failed completely. The destruction of a hope which the king himself had created, was not a subject for laughter: tenderness, and not insult, should have been mingled with a cup of the utmost bitterness. The effect of Falstaff's disappointment was death; the king had "killed his heart."* Shakspeare certainly intended Henry's conduct to stand beyond the reach of question; he would surely, therefore, have done wisely to omit an expression which represents the end of Falstaff as so truly pitiable. A reference to Stowe in this case would have been eminently useful to him: the prince's companions are there disposed of in a manner gratifying to the feelings of humanity, and consistent with the claims of justice. "After his coronation, King Henry called unto him all those young lords and gentlemen who were the followers of his young acts, *to every one of whom he gave rich gifts; and*

* Hen. V. Act II. sc. 1.

then commanded that as many as would change their manners, as he intended to do, *should abide with him in his court*; and to all that would persevere in their former like conversation, he gave express commandment, upon pain of their heads, never after that day to come in his presence.”

Here are, indeed, materials for a noble scene, in which Henry might have appeared with a splendour superadded to his present lustre.*

Whatever pains the creation of Shallow and Silence cost Shakspeare, he was amply compensated by the pleasing variety which they communicate by their presence to the closing scenes of Henry the Fourth. As his historical subject drew towards a close, and the Chronicles failed to supply a succession of incidents suitable to the purposes of the drama, the demands on the dramatist's invention were reiterated. Whilst the prince, Poins, and Falstaff are almost continually on the stage, Bardolph and Pistol are judiciously placed in the back ground, and as judiciously propelled when the reformation of Henry, the death of Falstaff, and the loss of Poins, left the scene vacant. But they poorly compensate us for our loss.

* Note B.

Bardolph, like his master, is a liar, a thief, and a coward; but, unlike his master, he has no wit but in his nose: furnish him in this corporeal particular like other men, and he would immediately sink into a duller companion than most people. Whilst selecting incidents for Bardolph's character, the poet was not unmindful of the *vrai-semblance* of his picture of the wars in France. "A soldier," says Holinshed, "took a *pix* out of a church, for which he was apprehended, and the king not once removed till the box was restored, and the offender strangled." Such is the crime, and such the end of Bardolph.* Before finally parting with him it should be mentioned, that the trick he relates Falstaff to have devised for giving himself and companions the appearance of men fresh from fight † is copied from the old play.

"Every day when I went into the field,
I would take a straw and thrust it into my nose,
And make my nose bleed."

Pistol is a far more effective personage than his fellow. He makes no despicable show as a swaggering, pompous braggadocio in his cir-

* Henry V. Act III. sc. 6.

† Part I. Act II. sc. 4. "Yea and to tickle our noses with spear grass, to make them bleed."

cumscribed sphere of action in the second part of Henry the Fourth; and his increased importance in Henry the Fifth justifies the experiment of expanding his character. The ridiculous scene with the French soldier* would have been omitted with advantage; but Shakspeare was led astray by a piece of farce equally (it would be hard to say more) absurd between Dericke and a Frenchman, in the old play.

The boaster and coward Nym is accurately discriminated from Pistol. They may be quoted in illustration of the different appearance given to the same qualities by the personal characters of their possessors.

The honourable and amiable, but ludicrous Fluellen, likewise emanated from the imagination of Shakspeare. The Welshman's garrulity, however, is not all assigned to him at random, several trifling particulars being interwoven in his "pibble pabble," which were noted by the poet in his perusal of Holinshed.

When Fluellen complains that "th'athvesary is dight himself four yards under the countermines; by Cheshier, I think, 'a will plow up all, if there is not better directions,"—Shakspeare had in view the historian's account of the

* Henry V. Act IV. sc. 4.

failure of the English to effect their conquest by the operation of mining. "They with their countermining somewhat disappointed the Englishmen, and came to fight with them hand to hand within the mines, so that they went no further forward with that work."

The admonition to speak lower*, which Gower receives from Fluellen, is likewise founded on a passage in Holinshed. "Order was taken by commandment from the king after the army was first set in battle array, that no noise or clamour should be made in the host." It is truly replied by Gower, "the enemy is loud; you heard him all night," for, says the Chronicle, the Frenchmen "all that night made great cheer, and were very merry, pleasant, and full of game."

Illustrative instances of Shakspeare's use of his authorities in the composition of these plays might be multiplied with ease, but, probably, without advantage, as it has been kept much in view to adduce those passages most recommended by their interest or importance. It will have been observed, that the poet's deviations from history are principally made with a view to dramatic convenience; and that he is indebted

* Act IV. sc. 1.

to his theatrical predecessor for little that is valuable except the happy idea of representing Henry the Fifth in his twofold character of a dissipated prince and a warlike king. By the expansion of the narrow plan of the old play into a general view of the reigns of the two Henrys, Shakspeare opened to himself a wide field for the exercise of one of his greatest talents, — delineation of character. The highly-finished portraits of Henry the Fourth and Fifth, and of Hotspur and Glendower, founded on scanty notices of history, and from hints in the old play so often alluded to, mark the vigour and fertility of the mind that produced them. It may justly be conceded to the anonymous author, that the representation of Henry surrounded by dissolute companions led to the production of Falstaff, Poins, Bardolph, and Pistol : his claim to any other merit in their composition will never be asserted. Shallow, Silence, the Page ; Mouldy, Shadow, Wart, Feeble, and Bull-calf ; Mrs. Quickly and Doll Tear-sheet, are all foils for Falstaff's wit. What other dramatist could have afforded the expenditure of so much talent upon the adorning of mere auxiliary characters ?

This series of plays is written with extraordinary animation of style. The humblest thoughts

are perpetually adorned with delicate graces of expression.

How beautiful and just is Henry's apostrophe to sleep *, and how exquisitely touching Exeter's narration of the glorious death of the Duke of York at the battle of Agincourt. † Some passages of a different complexion have been already noticed, and more, unhappily, remain. The scene between Katharine and Alice ‡ was perhaps never surpassed in absurdity. Hal's exploits with the drawers, and his poor witticism upon Francis, are miserable attempts at mirth. § Little is added to the pleasantry of Hal, and much detracted from the dignity of the king, by his joke of purchasing Fluellen a box on the ear with the gift of the soldier's glove. || What must be said of the Welsh lady whom the author has directed to gabble what he could not set down ¶, and what no audience ever assembled in London would have comprehended, even if Shakspeare had possessed the ability of writing Welsh as fluently as it was chaunted by the bards! It

* Henry IV. Part II. Act III. sc. 1.

† Henry V. Act III. sc. 6.

‡ Henry V. Act III. sc. 4.

§ Henry IV. Part I. Act II. sc. 4.

|| Henry V. Act IV sc. 8.

¶ Henry IV. Part I. Act III. sc. 1.

may not be proper to designate the introduction of Glendower's daughter as a failure, for it is hazardous to say what effect she was intended to produce: assuredly, she is neither "witty herself, nor the cause of wit in others."

HENRY VI.

First Part, 1589.

Second and Third Parts, 1591.

THE three parts of Henry the Sixth have been attributed to Shakspeare on the authority of the first editors of his dramas; an allusion to them by the poet himself*, and the apparent connection between the last act of the third part, and the first act of Richard the Third.

In 1594 the first part of a play, still in existence, was printed under the title of “The Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster:” the second part was published in 1595, distinguished from the first by its title, “The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York, and the good King Henry the Sixth; with the whole contention between the two Houses of Lancaster and York.” Both parts were re-

* “They lost fair France, and made his England bleed:
Which oft our stage hath shown; and, for their sake,
In your fair minds let this acceptance take.”

(*Last Chorus to Henry V.*)

printed together in 1600, without any author's name, but described in the title page as plays "sundry times acted by the Earl of Pembroke his servants." Both were again printed in 1619, when their correction and enlargement were assigned to Shakspeare, though the edition was a reprint of that of 1600.

Between these plays, and the second and third parts of Henry the Sixth, as exhibited in the first folio edition of Shakspeare's works, many points of similarity subsist: the events represented, the arrangement of the action, and the dramatis personæ are, generally speaking, the same; not only single lines, but whole speeches are found in the quarto plays and in Shakspeare's works, distinguishable from each other by trifling verbal differences only. A coincidence so remarkable has given rise to two contradictory opinions: 1. "the old copies were Shakspeare's first drafts of the pieces which he afterwards wrought into greater perfection:" 2. "they were editions of Shakspeare's plays surreptitiously obtained by a short-hand writer, or a person of retentive memory, who witnessed their representation on the stage."

To the latter supposition it is triumphantly answered, that the quarto plays contain much matter, of which no trace is to be found in the folio:

the superabundance does not consist only of occasional amplifications of such thoughts, dialogues, and speeches as are found in the folio; but likewise of thoughts, dialogues, and speeches, and facts narrated and exhibited, of which the folio does not even afford a hint. The errors of a person who wrote from memory, or from notes of what he had seen and heard, would indisputably be those of *omission* or *variation*; but how is it possible to suppose him writing down what he neither heard nor saw, without also supposing fraud: but fraud would have defeated the very object he had in view, the exhibition of as perfect a copy as possible of the play represented.

The first supposition is also satisfactorily answered. No author more frequently repeats his thoughts and quotes himself than Shakspeare. An examination of the two quarto plays, with the undoubted works of Shakspeare, detects no coincidences of thought or expression between them, whilst a comparison of the second and third parts of Henry the Sixth with Shakspeare's genuine works, yields a variety of both descriptions of coincidence. Whence it is inferred, that the former are not the works of Shakspeare, but that the latter are. Pushing this argument one step further, the true conclusion is arrived

at. All the lines that appear in the quartos and in the folio, in the same form, were the composition of a dramatist who preceded Shakspeare* ; the lines that appear in the folio and the quarto, with variations, were altered by Shakspeare from the work of his predecessor † ; all the verses that are exhibited by the folio and are not found in the quartos, were the entire composition of Shakspeare. ‡ It follows, that the two parts of the contention of the two Houses of York and Lancaster, were the production of a writer who preceded our bard, and that Shakspeare took those plays for the basis of his second and third parts of Henry the Sixth, as he founded the Taming of the Shrew on the Taming of a Shrew ; King John, on the Troublesome Reign ; the two parts of Henry the Fourth and Henry the Fifth, on The Famous Victories ; King Lear on the History of King Lear and his Daughters ; and Measure for Measure, on Whetstones' Promos and Cassandra. § The description, in the edition

* Of these there are 1771.

† In number 2373.

‡ Which are 1899.

§ Malone wrote an elaborate Dissertation on the Three Parts of Henry the Sixth, in which these positions are proved to demonstration. How much is it to be regretted that this gentleman should ever have deserted the sound principles of criticism, to embark, as he did with delight, on the vast and trackless ocean of conjecture !

of 1600, of the two quartos as plays, "acted by the Earl of Pembroke his servants," is corroborative of this opinion, as not one of Shakspeare's plays are said in their title pages to have been acted by any but the Lord Chamberlain's, or the Queen's, or the King's servants; whilst *Titus Andronicus* and the *Taming of a Shrew* were acted by Lord Pembroke's servants.

It is a corroborative fact, also, that the two quarto plays were founded upon the *Chronicle of Hall*. *Holinshed*, and not *Hall*, is the historian whose narrative is followed in all the English historical plays of which Shakspeare was undoubtedly the author.

The second and third parts of *Henry the Sixth*, as printed in the first folio, being then, in fact, "*The Whole Contention*," &c. "corrected and enlarged," it is easily explained how the original work became so described in the quarto of 1619. It was a mere bookseller's trick to deceive his customers into a belief that they were purchasing the plays exhibited at Shakspeare's theatre: the words in the title page of 1600, "acted by the Earl of Pembroke his servants," were omitted, and "*Newly corrected and enlarged by William Shakspeare*," fraudulently inserted in their stead. *William Pavier* was the printer. Let not the reader think him libelled.

The old play of King John was originally printed in 1591, "as it was acted in the honourable city of London." Pavier reprinted it in 1611, omitting the quoted words, and adding the initials W. Sh., with the view of inducing the belief that the play was a play of Shakspeare.

Few words need be said respecting the first part of Henry the Sixth. As a general proposition it is beyond controversy true, that neither the sentiments, allusions, diction, nor versification bear any resemblance to Shakspeare's undisputed plays. A few lines are, indeed, fixed on as such as Shakspeare might have written. Perhaps they were written by him; for what improbability is there in the supposition, that a performance which formed a suitable, if not necessary, introduction to two plays on which he bestowed some labour, was not totally neglected by him, though he undertook no formal revision of its scenes?

There is no edition of this play antecedent to that of the first folio. The editors inserted it as knowing that Shakspeare had considered it introductory to the two plays which he had written on the events of the same king's reign: hence it naturally became denominated the First Part, and Shakspeare's two plays, the Second and Third Parts of Henry the Sixth;

or the editors might have admitted it into their folio, because Shakspeare was the author of a few lines in it: for no better reason they published Titus Andronicus as one of his works.

If the merit of the Second and Third Parts of Henry the Sixth entitled them to a high rank among the works of Shakspeare, a minute investigation of his deviations from his predecessor, would be interesting and instructive; but as it is confessed on all hands that they are decidedly inferior to the poet's other dramas, it will be sufficient to direct attention to one celebrated scene, and to the first dramatic sketch of that Duke of Gloucester whom Shakspeare has immortalised as the tyrant Richard.

The shortness of the scene of Cardinal Beaufort's death makes its transcription from the original quarto practicable.

Card. "O Death, if thou wilt let me live but one whole year, I'll give thee as much gold as will purchase such another island.

King. O see, my Lord of Salisbury, how he is troubled. Lord Cardinal, remember, Christ must have thy soul.

Card. Why, dy'd he not in his bed?
 What would you have me to do then?
 Can I make men live, whether they will or no?
 Sirrah, go fetch me the strong poison, which
 The 'pothecary sent me.
 O, see where Duke Humphrey's ghost doth stand,

And stares me in the face! Look; look; comb down his hair.

So now, he's gone again. Oh, oh, oh!

Salis. See how the pangs of death doth gripe his heart.

King. Lord Cardinal, if thou diest assured of heavenly bliss,

Hold up thy hand and make some sign to me.

[*The Cardinal dies.*

O see, he dies, and makes no sign at all!

O God, forgive his soul!

Salis. So bad an end did never none behold:

But as his death, so was his life in all.

King. Forbear to judge, good Salisbury, forbear;
For God will judge us all. Go take him hence,
And see his funerals be perform'd." [Exeunt.

Shakspeare only preserved, in his Second Part of Henry the Sixth*, that line entire which is distinguished by an asterisk: every other line he either omitted or altered: of the fourteen lines which he inserted of his own composition, three are perfectly immaterial†; eight are pious ejaculations of Henry the Sixth‡, and three only have

* Act III. sc. 3.

† "How fares my lord? Speak, Beaufort, to thy sovereign."

* * * * *

"Beaufort, it is thy sovereign speaks to thee."

* * * * *

"Disturb him not, let him pass peaceably."

‡ "Ah, what a sign it is of evil life,
When death's approach is seen so terrible."

* * * * *

"O thou

in view the illustration of the terrors of a guilty conscience*; to which, however, they do not much contribute.

As no contemptible idea will be formed of the author of a play in which the quoted scene is found, it may not be thought surprising that the character of Richard is, considering the narrow sphere in which he moves, skilfully and vigorously sketched.

Bold and energetic, he delights in war and bloodshed: his courage is not devoid of heroism, but its display is rather prompted by a thirst for revenge than the acquisition of military renown. The darker passions so much predominate in his bosom, as to absorb in their violence every emotion of sensibility, and, in the identical words of the quarto, he has "neither pity, love, nor fear." But ambition is the prominent

"O thou eternal mover of the heavens,
 Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch!
 O, beat away the busy meddling fiend,
 That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul,
 And from his bosom purge this black despair!"

* * *

"Peace to his soul, if God's good pleasure it be!"

* "Bring me unto my trial when you will."

* * * *

"O! torture me no more, I will confess."

* * * *

"He hath no eyes, the dust hath blinded them."

feature in his character, and to this all his other passions are auxiliary. For this his sword is ever remorselessly unsheathed; ambition points it against those who seek the downfall of his House, and from its glittering blade drop tears of blood "weeping the death" of a Lancastrian king. Ambition bows his proud and stubborn nature as low, even, as to the servility of hypocrisy: he condescends to "smile," and "add colours to the cameleon," for he "murders while he smiles." The prevailing expression of brutal ferocity in Richard is relieved by a broad vein of humour, now pointed by the malignity of sarcasm, now softened into sallies of licentious gaiety.

The Dukes of Gloucester of the anonymous author and of Shakspeare, are marked by the same leading features. It will be interesting to cite a few instances of the additions made by Shakspeare when he revised his predecessor's plays.

The three following additional lines very forcibly express the resolute determination of Richard.

" Then, Clifford, were thy heart as hard as steel,
 (As thou hast shown it flinty by thy deeds,)
 I come to pierce it, — or to give thee mine."*

* Part III. Act II. sc. 2.

Another line conveys the same idea with the added impression of his remorseless and impenetrable nature.

“ Tears, then, for babes ; blows and revenge for me.”*

In the first scene of the fourth act†, Shakspeare has thrown in a stroke or two of irony with great effect.

Glos. “ Hath not our brother made a worthy choice ?

Clar. Alas! you know 'tis far from hence to France ;

How could he stay till Warwick made return ?

Som. My lords, forbear this talk ; here comes the king.

Glo. And his well-chosen bride.”

Like the anonymous author, Shakspeare made ambition Richard's leading principle, and how beautifully he strengthened this characteristic in Gloster's address to the Duke of York.

And, father, do but think,
How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown ;
Within whose circuit is Elysium,
And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.”‡

But the most important obligations conferred upon the original character, are in the additions made to the following soliloquy of Richard. It has not been thought necessary to distinguish the lines which Shakspeare merely altered from the old play : those printed in italics were his own entire composition.

* Part III. Act II. sc. 1. † Part III. ‡ Part III. Act I. sc. 2.

“ Ay, Edward will use women honourably.
 ‘Would he were wasted, marrow, bones, and all,
 That from his loins no hopeful branch may spring,
 To cross me from the golden time I look for!
 And yet, between my soul’s desire, and me,
 (*The lustful Edward’s title buried,*)
 Is Clarence, Henry, and his son young Edward,
 And all the unlook’d-for issue of their bodies,
 To take their rooms, ere I can place myself:
 A cold premeditation for my purpose!
*Why, then I do but dream on sovereignty ;
 Like one that stands upon a promontory,
 And spies a far-off shore where he would tread,
 Wishing his foot were equal with his eye ;
 And chides the sea that sunders him from thence,
 Saying — he’ll lade it dry to have his way :
 So do I wish the crown, being so far off ;
 And so I chide the means that keep me from it ;
 And so I say — I’ll cut the causes off,
 Flattering me with impossibilities. —
 My eye’s too quick, my heart o’erweens too much,
 Unless my hand and strength could equal them.
 Well, say there is no kingdom then for Richard :
 What other pleasure can the world afford ?*
 I’ll make my heaven in a lady’s lap,
 And deck my body in gay ornaments,
 And witch sweet ladies with my words and looks
 O miserable thought! and more unlikely,
 Than to accomplish twenty golden crowns!
 Why, love foreswore me in my mother’s womb :
 And, for I should not deal in her soft laws,
 She did corrupt frail nature with some bribe
 To shrink mine arm up like a wither’d shrub ;
 To make an envious mountain on my back,
 Where sits deformity to mock my body ;

To shape my legs of an unequal size;
To disproportion me in every part,
Like to a chaos, or an unlick'd bear whelp,
That carries no impression like the dam.
 And am I then a man to be belov'd?
 O, monstrous fault, to harbour such a thought!
Then, since this earth affords no joy to me,
But to command, to check, to o'erbear such
As are of better person than myself,
I'll make my heaven — to dream upon the crown;
And, whiles I live, to account this world but hell,
Until my mis-shap'd trunk that bears this head,
Be round empaled with a glorious crown.
And yet I know not how to get the crown,
For many lives stand between me and home:
And I — like one lost in a thorny wood,
That rents the thorn, and is rent with the thorns;
Seeking a way and straying from the way;
Not knowing how to find the open air,
But toiling desperately to find it out; —
Torment myself to catch the English crown:
And from that torment I will free myself,
Or hew my way out with a bloody axe.
 Why, I can smile, and murder while I smile;
 And cry content, to that which grieves my heart;
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions.
I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall;
I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk;
I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,
Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,
And, like a Sinon, take another Troy:
 I can add colours to the cameleon;
 Change shapes, with Proteus, for advantages,
 And set the murderous Machiavel to school.

Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?
Tut! were it further off, I'll pluck it down."*

It will be observed of this speech, of which Shakspeare furnished rather more than half, that many of the additions are mere amplifications of thoughts previously expressed; and that some lines, especially the five last of Shakspeare's composition, would have been better omitted. But the importance of others can hardly be too highly appreciated. What an hiatus of thought is supplied by the lines intervening between —

“ A cold premeditation for my purpose !”

and

“ I'll make my heaven in a lady's lap.”

Above all, how magnificently do the ambitious monster's present motives and future views open in the lines commencing —

“ Then since this earth affords no joy to me.”

Ambition is Richard's characteristic. His consciousness of his inability to enjoy the common sympathies of life, gives rise to feelings of hatred and indignation against mankind. His ambition for the crown had been already fully

* Act III. sc. 2.

developed; but that ambition was strengthened by the hope that in its gratification he would be able to indulge those feelings which had been created by a bitter sense of his own deformity. The idea was not entirely Shakspeare's; for after the murder of Henry in the old play, Gloster comments on the prophecy of the dying monarch, and invokes the infernal powers to assimilate his mind to his body, which was so much distinguished from that of other men by its deformity, that he exclaims —

“ I have no brother, *I am like no brother :*
 And this word love, which greybeards call divine,
 Be resident *in men like one another*
 And not in me ; I am myself *alone*—”

Some regret may perhaps be felt at depriving Shakspeare of lines so long and so generally identified with his name; but, like many other good things in the Second and Third Parts of Henry the Sixth, they must be assigned to the author of “ The Whole Contention;” and among others, that passage of bitterest irony —

“ What, will the aspiring blood of Lancaster
 Sink in the ground?”

Shakspeare polished, invigorated, and corrected much of what he found rude, uncouth, feeble, or injudicious in his predecessor, and, particularly, gave shape and consistency to the

character of the Duke of Gloster; but the attempt to compress the events of a long and varied reign into a dramatic representation, was attended with difficulties which even the genius of Shakspeare was unable to surmount. For the sake of connection he was compelled to notice many particulars of trifling import; and hence he was deprived of space to dwell on incidents more worthy of his pen. The consequence is, that the number of his characters prevented him from concentrating the spectator's attention: scenes follow each other without exciting curiosity at their commencement, or regret at their conclusion.

RICHARD III.

1593.

THE occurrences in the brief reign of Richard, were recorded under the linc-eyed scrutiny of the jealous Tudors, a dynasty whose claim to the throne was that of conquest, or the unfounded pretence of having delivered a suffering nation from the yoke of an oppressor. The name of Richard has therefore reached posterity under a weight of obloquy which the impartial pens of modern writers will never, perhaps, be entirely able to remove. Shakspeare imbibed all the Lancastrian prejudices, and he had moreover others which we cannot trace to that source: that the modern detestation of Richard is, in a great measure, to be attributed to the popularity of Shakspeare's drama cannot be doubted, and it will be the business of the following pages to trace how far the poet followed the authority of historians, and how much of his portrait of the crook-backed tyrant is attributable only to himself.

Shakspeare's historical authorities were the History of Richard the Third, by Sir Thomas More, and its Continuation in Holinshed's Chronicle. Unlike the usual contents of the Chronicles, Sir Thomas More's history is not a mere record of facts, but its pages are enriched by much eloquence of style, and, what was infinitely more important to the dramatist, an animated and discriminative picture of the hero of the narrative. "Richard, the third son (of Richard Duke of York), was in wit and courage equal with either of them, (his brothers Edward the Fifth and George Duke of Clarence) in body and prowess far under them both, little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard favoured of visage, and such as is in states called warlike, in other men otherwise; he was malicious, wrathful, envious, and from afore his birth ever froward. It is for truth reported, that the duchess his mother had so much ado in her travail, that she could not be delivered of him uncut; and that he came into the world with the feet forward, as men be born outward, and (as the fame runneth also) not untoothed, whether men of hatred report above the truth, or else that nature changed her course in his beginning, which in the course of his life many

things unnaturally committed. None evil captain was he in the war, as to which his disposition was more metely than for peace. Sundry victories had he, and sometime overthrows, but never in default as for his own person, either of hardiness or politic order,—free was he called of dispense, and somewhat above his power liberal, with large gifts he got him unstedfast friendship, for which he was fain to pil and spoil in other places, and get him stedfast hatred. He was close and secret, a deep dissembler, lowly of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardly companionable where he inwardly hated, not letting to kiss whom he thought to kill: dispiteous and cruel, not for evil will alway, but after for ambition, and either for the surety or increase of his estate. Friend and foe was much what indifferent, where his advantage grew, he spared no man's death, whose life withstood his purpose." Here were ample materials for the mind of a poet; and it must be reckoned, also, as an advantage which Shakspeare enjoyed in the composition of his drama, that he had already bestowed much attention on the character of Richard, as the Duke of Gloster, while engaged in the revision of "The True Tragedy of the Duke of York." So well was the poet pleased

with the principles on which the character of Gloster was constructed, that his Richard exhibits a continuation of their developement. He is fierce and bloody, and his bold designs are unchecked by any moral curb. One object engrosses his mind, — the attainment of the crown; and if his character were to be estimated only from the opening soliloquy of the play, it might be contended that the foundation of his ambition was laid in repinings at a deformity repulsive to love and effeminate delights of peace: but it is evident from the third part of Henry the Sixth, that ambition in the general sense and common form of that passion was his characteristic, and that it was strengthened, not created, by the malicious desire of the power of revenging himself on men better graced by nature. He is morose and savage when disappointed or opposed, but in the flood of prosperity he unbends: his wit is brilliant, sometimes playful, though generally distinguished by bitter irony, sarcastic levity, and wanton insult: the queen, and her friends are favourite subjects of his cruel mirth. Richard the Third, not less than Gloster in the “*Tragical History*,” is a master in the art of hypocrisy, and a happier display of versatile villainy could not have been made than what is exhibited in the courtship of Lady Ann; but sober

criticism will question whether dramatic effect be not lessened by that celebrated scene. The confidence of the wooer is inconsistent with his previously expressed opinion, that his assumption of the character of a lover would be preposterous. His surprise at his success ;

“ What ! I, that kill'd her husband, and his father,”

pleads guilty, by anticipation, to the objection which might be justly urged against the probability of his preceding conquest.

Shakspeare had no authority whatever for assigning Lady Ann a place in the funeral procession of Henry the Sixth, and much less for assigning Richard's courtship of the lady to an hour so unpropitious. His historians call her *widow*, and hence his error of representing her as the wife of Edward, but in point of fact she was *betrothed*, not *married*, to that prince.

It is in conformity with the authorities he followed, that Shakspeare makes Richard the murderer of his wife, and Queen Elizabeth dissemble an assent to the marriage of her daughter to the monarch. The charging of the king with the murder of his wife is contradictory to the other testimony of the same historian, that Richard was affectionate in his attention to Ann. With respect to his marriage with his

niece Elizabeth, so far is it from appearing to have been a disagreeable proposition to her, that on the contrary the youthful princess wrote a letter with her own hand to the Duke of Norfolk, soliciting him to become a mediator for her to the king, in behalf of the marriage propounded between them. She adds, that he, the king, was her only joy and maker in this world, and that she was his in heart and thought. Richard was, at this period, not thirty-three years of age; and the princess nineteen. It was not unfair of Shakspeare to assume Richard's guilt with respect to the death of Clarence, though Sir Thomas More is free to acknowledge that "of all this point there is no certainty." To deepen the effect of the dramatic portrait, it was necessary to blacken Richard, and the poet therefore represented him applying to Clarence the idle prophecy "that after King Edward one should reign, whose first letter of his name should be a G*;" though it would appear, from what is further related by the historian, that the relatives of the queen might, with more propriety, have been charged with the insidious crime: "and thereby old malice revived betwixt the king and his brother; which the queen and her

* Holinshed. Edward IV.

blood (ever mistrusting, and privily barking at the king's lineage) ceased not to increase." Holinshed speaks of Clarence's being "privilie drowned in a butt of malmesie," as of an execution according to due course of law.—Shakspeare seems to have been indebted to his own imagination only for the scene of Clarence in prison, his beautiful narrative of his dream, and the less happy dialogue of the murderers.

The death of his brothers, Edward and Clarence, assisted to clear the passage of Richard to the throne; and Shakspeare closely follows the historian, in representing the means he took to remove the minor impediments.

It appears, from Sir Thomas More, that the reception of the Duke of Buckingham by the citizens of London, was precisely such as is described in the drama. When, at the conclusion of his well-told tale, the Duke anticipated the cry of "King Richard! King Richard!" all was husht and mute, and not one word answered thereunto. * * * When the mayor saw this, he drew unto the Duke, and said, "that the people had not been accustomed there to be spoke unto but by the Recorder, which is the mouth of the city, and happely to him they will answer." With that the Recorder made rehearsal to the Commons of that the Duke had

twice rehearsed to them himself; but the Recorder so tempered his tale, "that he shewed every thing as the Duke's words and no part his own." The result was, that "at last, in the nether end of the hall a bushment of the Duke's servants, and Nashfeld's, and other longing to the Protector, with some 'prentices and lads that thrust into the hall among the press, began suddenly at mens backs to cry out as loud as their throats would give: "King Richard! King Richard!" and threw up their caps in token of joy. * * And when the Duke and the Mayor saw this manner, they wisely turned it to their purpose. And said, "it was a goodly cry and a joyful to hear, every man with one voice, no man saying nay. Wherefore, friends, quoth the Duke, since that we perceive it is all your whole minds to have this nobleman for your king, whereof we shall make his grace so effectual report, that we doubt not but it shall redound unto your great weal and commodity: we require ye, that ye to-morrow go with us, and we with you, unto his noble grace, to make our humble request unto him in manner before remembered." * Shakspeare had no authority

* Sir Thomas More.

for ascribing to Richard the arch hypocrisy of being

“ Well accompanied,
With reverend divines, and well learned bishops,”

when he expected the arrival of the citizens; but a reference to Sir Thomas More furnishes a pleasing commentary on Gloster's command :

“ Go, Lovel, with all speed to doctor Shaw, —
Go thou [*to Catesby*], to friar Penker ; — bid them both
Meet me, within this hour, at Baynard's castle.” *

Shaw and Penker were “ both doctors of divinity, both great preachers; both of more learning than virtue; of more fame than learning.

* * * For these two the one had a sermon in praise of the Protector before the coronation, the other after; both so full of tedious flattery, than no man's ears could abide them. Penker in his sermon so lost his voice, that he was fain to leave off and come down in the middes. Doctor Shaw by his sermon lost his honesty, and soon after his life, for very shame of the world, into which he durst never after come abroad. But the friar forced for no shame, and so it harmed him the less.”

No intimation is given in history, that Richard

ever consulted Buckingham respecting the murder of the young princes, as represented by Shakspeare, who is consequently wrong in assigning the reluctance of the duke to comply with his sovereign's bloody suggestion, as the primary cause of dissention between them. The circumstance, as recorded by More, which led to the separation of Richard and his favourite, was the pretension of Buckingham himself to the crown. His demand of "the earldom of Hereford and the moveables," let Richard at once into his designs; "forasmuch, as the title (that of Duke of Hereford) was somewhat interlaced with the title to the crown, by the line of King Henry before deprived, the Protector conceived such indignation, that he rejected the duke's request with many spiteful and minatory words, which so wounded his heart with hatred and mistrust, that he never after could endure to look aright on King Richard, but ever feared his own life." *

Shakspeare should have gone further than he did in his adherence to Sir Thomas More; and not only have made Buckingham offended at the rejection of his claim, but grounded Richard's irritation on his prosecution of it.

* Sir T. More.

Thus far respecting Shakspeare and Sir Thomas More. But how stands the historical fact? Seven days after his coronation, Richard gave to Buckingham his letters patent, by which he willed and granted, that in the next parliament, the duke should be legally restored, from the preceding Easter, to all the manors, lordships, and lands of the Earl of Hereford, specified in the schedule. The crown could not make a fuller grant: it only wanted the parliamentary sanction.

Following the arrangement of the drama, which connects the murder of the princes with the disgrace of Buckingham, it remains to notice, that Sir James Tirrel, Miles Forest, and John Dighton, whom Shakspeare brings upon the scene, were the persons actually employed in the perpetration of the horrid deed. Tirrel's assertion,

“ The chaplain of the tower hath buried them ;
But where, to say the truth, I do not know ,”*

displays the poet's remembrance of one passage, and forgetfulness of another, in Sir Thomas More; who first narrates, that Tirrel himself directed the burial of the children “at the stair foot, meetly deep in the ground under a great heap of stones.” But, it is added, the bodies

* Act IV. sc. 3.

were afterwards taken up by “a priest of Sir Robert Brakenbury, and secretly interred in such place, as by the occasion of his death, which only knew it, could never since come to light. Very truth it is and well known, that at such time as Sir James Tirrel was in the Tower, for treason committed against the most famous prince, King Henry the Seventh, both Dighton and he were examined, and confessed the murder in manner above written, *but whither the bodies were removed they could nothing tell.*”

The blood of his nephews secured not to Richard quiet possession of the throne, but, “the Bretagne Richmond now looks proudly on the crown,” and “stirred up by Dorset, Buckingham and Morton makes for England.”* The statement is historically true, as are the events successively represented;—the dispersion of Buckingham and his “rash-levied strength” “by sudden floods and fall of waters†, his capture and execution;—Richard’s doubts of Stanley on account of his wife’s relationship to Richmond, and Richard’s retaining of young George Stanley, as a pledge for his father’s truth.‡ The irritability, impatience, and indecision of a mistrustful mind are boldly delineated as Richard becomes harassed by the defection of

* Act IV. sc. 4.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

his friends and the growth of Richmond's power, and a tinge of melancholy, ever inseparable from anxiety and doubt, is beautifully dashed in at the approach of the awful crisis.* In all this Shakspeare still kept the historian in view. When tidings came that Richmond had arrived at Shrewsburie without opposition, the king was "sore moved and broyled with melancholy and dolor, crying out, and asking vengeance of them that (against their oath and promise) had so deceived him." † The lines,

" I have not that alacrity of spirit,
Nor cheer of mind, that I was wont to have," ‡

are founded on the historian's assertion, that Richard used not "the alacrity and mirth of mind and countenance as he was accustomed to do before he came toward the battle." The direction,

" Saddle white Surrey for the field to-morrow §,"

originated in the description of Richard's entrance into Leicester "invironed with his guard with a frowning countenance and cruel visage, mounted on a great *white courser*." || The couplet,

" Jocky of Norfolk, be not too bold,
For Dickon thy master is bought and sold,"

* Act V. sc. 3.

† Holinshed.

‡ Act V. sc. 3.

§ Ibid.

|| Holinshed.

is found in Holinshed with the single variation of "Jacke" for Jocky.

The night previous to the battle was, according to the historian, terrible to Richard. "The fame went that he had a dreadful and terrible dream: for it seemed to him, being asleep, that he did see divers images like terrible devils, which pulled and haled him, not suffering him to take any quiet or rest. The which strange vision not so suddenly strake his heart with a sudden fear, but it stuffed his head and troubled his mind with many busy and dreadful imaginations.

* . * And lest that it might be suspected that he was abashed for fear of his enemies, and for that cause looked so piteously, he recited and declared to his familiar friends in the morning his wonderful vision and fearful dream." *
Such is the conduct of the dramatic tyrant.

"By the apostle Paul, shadows to-night
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers,
Armed in proof, and led by shallow Richmond." †

Shakspeare modified the "terrible devils" into "the souls of all that he had murdered." The starting of the affrighted tyrant from his couch, was suggested by the narration of Sir Thomas More: after the murder of his nephews, "he

* Holinshed.

† Act V. sc. 3.

never had quiet in his mind, he never thought himself sure. * * * He took ill rest a'nights, lay long waking and musing, sore wearied with care and watch, rather slumbered than slept, troubled with fearful dreams, suddenly sometimes *start up, leap out of his bed and run about the chamber.*" The first six lines of the soliloquy which Shakspeare assigns to Richard, on this occasion, are deeply expressive of the terrors of a guilty conscience; but the conceits and quibbles which disfigure the remainder, completely destroy the moral impression.

But the terrors of a disordered imagination were quickly dispelled by the bustle of active preparation, and on the morning of the momentous contest the warlike character of Richard shone forth in all its wonted splendour. He addressed his followers in a lengthened justification of his own cause, of encouraging confidence in success, and of contemptuous invective against his foes. It is unnecessary to transcribe more of his speech than illustrates some of the scenes of Shakspeare. "You see also, what a number of beggarly Britains and faint-hearted Frenchmen be with him (Richmond) arrived to destroy us, our wives, and children. * * * And to begin with the Earl of Richmond, captain of this rebellion, he is a Welsh milk-sop, a man of small

courage, and of less experience in martial acts and feats of war, brought up by my mother's means*, and mine, like a captive in a close cage in the court of Francis Duke of Britain; and never saw army, nor was exercised in martial affairs: by reason whereof he neither can, nor is able by his own witt or experience to guide or rule an host." * * "And as for the Frenchmen and Britans, their valiantness is such, that our noble progenitors and your valiant parts have them oftener vanquished and overcome in one month, than they in the beginning imagined possibly to compass and finish in a whole year. What will you make of them? Beggars without audacity, drunkards without discretion, ribalds without reason, cowards without resisting, and, in conclusion, the most effeminate and lascivious people that ever shewed themselves in front of battle; ten times more courageous to flee and escape than once to assault the breast of our strong and populous

* It is so indisputable that Shakspeare acquired his knowledge of English history from Holinshed, that no formal proof has been thought necessary of a fact so generally admitted: if one be required, take the present instance: Shakspeare says, "long kept in Bretagne at our *mother's* cost." Holinshed has the passage as above, and he copied from Hall, who, however, has his *brother*, instead of *mother*.

army. * * * As for me, I assure you, this day I will triumph by glorious victory, or suffer death for immortal fame.”* That this was no idle vaunt is learnt from a subsequent page of the historian. “When the loss of the battle was imminent and apparent, they brought to him a swift and a light horse, to convey him away.” But he disdained an ignominious flight, and “inflamed with ire and vexed with outrageous malice, he put his spurs to his horse, and rode out of the side of the range of his battle, leaving the vant-guard fighting; and like a hungry lion ran with spear in rest toward him. The Earl of Richmond perceived well the king furiously coming toward him, and because the whole hope of his wealth and purpose was to be determined by battle, he gladly proffered to encounter with him body to body, and man to man. King Richard set on so sharply at the first brunt, that he overthrew the earl’s standard, and slew Sir William Brandon his standard-bearer, and matched hand to hand with Sir John Cheinie, a man of great force and strength, which would have resisted him: but the said John was by him manfully overthrown. And so he making open passage by dint of sword as he went forward, the Earl of

* Holinshed.

Richmond withstood his violence and kept him at the sword's point without advantage longer than his companions either thought or judged, which being almost in despair of victory, were suddenly recomforted by Sir William Stanley which came to succours with three thousand tall men, at which very instant King Richard's men were driven back and fled, and he himself manfully fighting in the middle of his enemies was slain and brought to his death as he worthily had deserved."

Shakspeare slightly notices one or two occurrences of this awful conflict; such as Richard's rejection of a horse when flight only could ensure his safety *; but he has given no character whatever to the fierce encounter between the martial competitors for the crown. "Enter Richard and Richmond; and exeunt, fighting," is the vapid close of the career of the only eminent personage of the tragedy.

Richard the Third had flourished as a dramatic hero previous to the composition of Shakspeare's play; and if internal evidence may be trusted, an old play printed in Malone's last edition of the great dramatist, was the work of one of his predecessors.

* "Slave, I have set my life upon a cast,
And I will stand the hazard of the die."

Shakspeare did not here, as on many other occasions, adopt the plan of the play before him; but grafted on his own view of the subject such hints as he conceived conducive to its improvement. In Shakspeare's play*, Brakenbury informs Elizabeth, that "the king" had strictly forbidden her visits to the princes. To her astonished interrogatory, "The king! who's that?" he replies, "I mean the lord protector." What follows is from the old play.

Forest. "My lord, it was one that was appointed by the king to be an aid to Sir Thomas Brakenbury.

King Edw. Did the king? why Miles Forest, am not I the king?

For. I would have said, my lord, your uncle, the Protector."

The dialogue between Richard and Lord Stanley, in the old play, furnishes these passages.

King. "Well, Stanley, I fear, it will be proved to the contrary, that thou didst furnish him both with money and munition; which, if it be, then look for no favour at my hands, but the due deserts of a traitor; but let this pass. What's your repair to our presence?"

Stan. Only this, my lord, that I may repair from the court to my house in the country.

King. Ay, sir, that you might be in Cheshire and Lancashire, then should your posts pass invisible into Britain, and you to depart the realm at pleasure; or else, I to

* Act IV. sc. 1.

suffer an intolerable foe under me, which I will not. But, Stanley, to be brief, thou shalt not go. * * * Come hither, Stanley, thou shalt go, leaving me here thy son and heir George Stanley for a pledge, that he may perish for thy fault if need should be; if thou likest this, go, if not — answer me briefly, and say quickly, no.”

The same leading idea is thus expressed in Shakspeare :

Stan. “ Pleaseth your majesty to give me leave,
I'll muster up my friends; and meet your grace,
Where, and what time, your majesty shall please.

Rich. Ay, ay! thou would'st be gone to join with
Richmond:

I will not trust you, sir.

Stan. Most mighty sovereign,
You have no cause to hold my friendship doubtful;
I never was, nor never will be false.

Rich. Well, go, muster men. But, hear, you leave behind
Your son, George Stanley; look your heart be firm,
Or else his head's assurance is but frail.”*

The reader is only troubled with the mention of a long soliloquy, which is assigned to Richard in the old play; because Shakspeare caught from it the idea of the formidable array of ghosts, which he produces to affright the soul of Richard.

— “ Sleep I, wake I, or whatsoever I do,
Mee thinks their ghosts come gaping for revenge

* Act IV. sc. 4.

Whom I have slain in reaching for a crown :
 Clarence complains and crieth for revenge,
 My nephews bloods revenge, revenge doth cry :
 The headless peers comes pressing for revenge ;
 And every one cries, let the tyrant die."

Few theatrical phrases have attained greater celebrity than Richard's clamorous demand for a horse, the origin of which is to be traced to the old play : "The battle enters, Richard wounded with his page."—*King*. "A horse, a horse, a fresh horse."—*Page*. "Ah, fly my lord, and save your life."—*King*. "Fly villain, look I as though I would fly, no first shall," &c.

The examination of Shakspeare's play with the historians, and his dramatic predecessor, might be pursued much further, but an additional gratification of the reader's curiosity could be afforded only at the risk of an exhaustion of his patience, Richard not simply being the first, but the only object of interest in the play. The abrupt grandeur of the opening soliloquy, his successful personification of the lover, the hypocrite, the humourist, and the hero, leave him without the show of a competitor. But still all does not appear to have been done for the character of which it is susceptible. It is not easy to conceive why the display of its excellence is principally confined

to the early scenes of the play, since the situations in the latter are equally favourable to the purposes of a dramatic writer. It is to be regretted that Shakspeare dwelt on less promising materials. The introduction of Margaret, the widowed queen of Henry the Sixth, is not only unnecessary, but improper: after the battle of Tewksbury, in which she was captured by the victorious Edward, she was ransomed by her father the Duke of Anjou, and never afterwards returned to England. — The clamorous squabbling in the third scene of the first act; the tedious negotiation between Richard and Elizabeth, in the fourth scene of the fourth act; and the harangues of the ghosts, are all insufferably tedious, and, like other long passages of dialogue, tend to no end but that of unnecessarily protracting the catastrophe.

In its general arrangement, also, the tragedy is not so excellent as most of Shakspeare's. Such short scenes as that of the Scrivener, the one between Stanley and Sir Christopher Urswick, and that of Buckingham led to execution, are sad violations of the continuity of the action.* It is a strong and curious proof of Shakspeare's submission to the dramatic usages

* Act III. sc. 6. Act IV. sc. 5. Act V. sc. 1.

of his time, violating as they did taste and propriety, that he encamps Richard on one side of the stage, and Richmond on the other: neither of them notices, nor is, indeed, aware of the presence of the other; and the ghosts rise between the chieftains' tents and address them alternately.*

But if Shakspeare has passed with carelessness over some minor passages, with what truth, and beauty, and feeling, has he distinguished others! We turn with delight to the ease and fluency with which the interview between Richard, Buckingham, and the citizens is expressed. Gloster's reply, commencing, "I cannot tell, if to depart in silence," is remarkable, in particular, for its unembarrassed expression of a complex idea without the aid of circumlocution.† Is it necessary to mention Tyrrel's description of the murder of the princes?‡ It cannot be: yet, who is not pleased to have it recalled to his recollection?

* Act V. sc. 3. † Act III. sc. 3. ‡ Act IV. sc. 7.

HENRY VIII.

 1603.

UNLIKE the other English historical plays of Shakspeare, Henry the Eighth had no predecessor on the stage. The page of history alone furnished materials for its composition, and so exact is the poet's conformity to his authorities, that there are few passages throughout the play which cannot be traced to Fox's Acts and Monuments of Christian Martyrs, or to Cavendishe's Life of Wolsey, as Shakspeare found it in the Chronicles of Holinshed. The proof of this assertion, to its full extent, could only be effected by transcripts of a length which would be irksome to the reader, while the notice of points of leading interest and importance, appears to be all that the subject calls for. — The play commences in 1521, the twelfth year of Henry's reign, and closes with the christening of Elizabeth in 1533.

Of the three leading characters in the play,

Henry, Katharine, and Wolsey, the last is most decidedly delineated with the greatest ability. The disappearance of the cardinal so early as at the termination of the third act, would hardly seem to have afforded sufficient scope for the complete development of his character, but a judicious selection of incidents, and a very careful composition of the part, have left no deficiency.

The introduction of Wolsey crushing, by bare-faced power, the Duke of Buckingham, one of the most potent and wealthy noblemen of the land, at once displays the prelate in all his pride, malignity and arrogance, while the short dialogues which precede and follow his interview with his victim, lightly, but distinctly, touch on these and other circumstances of the cardinal's character and history: the meanness of his birth, his ascent to the eminence of power by the force of his own ability, his presumption upon his talents, his ambition and his venality, are all brought to notice. Next follows that most daring and presumptuous act of his life, the attempt to exact money from the subject without sufficient authority.* "Wherefore, by the cardinal, there was devised strange commissions,

* Act I. sc. 2.

and sent into every shire, and commissioners appointed, and privy instructions sent to them how they should proceed in their sittings, and order the people to bring them to their purpose; which was, that the sixth part of every man's substance should be paid in money or plate to the king. Hereof followed such cursing, weeping, and exclamation against both king and cardinal, that pity it was to hear. * * *

The Duke of Suffolk, sitting in commission about this subsidy, persuaded by courteous means the rich clothiers to assent thereto: but when they came home, and went about to discharge and put from them their spinners, carders, fullers, weavers, and other artificers, which they kept in work aforetime, the people began to assemble in companies. * * * The king then came to Westminster to the cardinal's palace, and assembled there a council, in the which he openly protested, that his mind was never to ask any thing of his commons which might sound to the breach of his laws, wherefore he willed to know by whose means the commissions were so strictly given forth, to demand the sixth part of every man's goods. The cardinal excused himself, and said, that when it was moved in council how to levy money to the king's use; the king's council, and

namely the judges, said, that he might lawfully demand any sum by commission, and that by consent of the whole council it was done, and took God to witness that he never desired the hinderance of the commons, but like a true counsellor devised how to enrich the king. The king, indeed, was much offended that his commons were thus intreated, and thought it touched his honour, that his council should attempt such a doubtful matter in his name, and to be denied both of the spirualty and temporalty. Therefore he would no more of that trouble, but caused letters to be sent into all shires, that the matter should no further be talked of: and he pardoned all them that had denied the demand openly or secretly. The cardinal, to deliver himself of the evil will of the commons, purchased by procuring and advancing of this demand, affirmed, and caused it to be bruited abroad, that through his intercession the king had pardoned and released all things.”* The accordance of Shakspeare’s scene with these passages is strikingly obvious, but the part of Wolsey’s defence beginning with

“If I am traduced by ignorant tongues †,”

is Shakspeare’s own, and who but Shakspeare

* Holinshed.

† Act I. sc. 2.

could have interwoven so much worldly knowledge and such delicious poetry?

The representation in the play of the sumptuous entertainment given by the cardinal at York House, is extremely judicious, as an instance at once illustrative of the unlimited confidence and high estimation in which he was held by the king; of the profuse magnificence which characterised Wolsey's mode of life, and of the little value he set upon that austerity and self-denial which it was his duty to inculcate by precept and example. Shakspeare has done little more than convert the account which he found of this entertainment in Holinshed (who copied it from Stowe) into action and dialogue: the introduction of Anne Bullen is unauthorised, the idea of presenting her to Henry on this occasion being entirely the poet's, evidently suggested by the dramatic convenience and effect of the arrangement.

In assigning the refusal of the emperor to present Wolsey to the "archbishopric of Toledo *," as the origin of his desire of divorcing Katharine from the king, Shakspeare strictly adheres to the truth of history. "The cardinal verily was put in most blame for this scruple now cast into the king's conscience, for the hate he bare to the

* Act II. sc. 1.

emperor, because he would not grant to him the archbishopric of Toledo, for which he was a suitor. And, therefore, he did not only procure the king of England to join in friendship with the French king, but also sought a divorce betwixt the king and the queen, that the king might have had in marriage the duchess of Alençon, sister unto the French king. * * * Whilst these things were thus in hand, the cardinal of York was advised that the king had set his affections upon a young gentlewoman, named Anne, the daughter of Sir Thomas Bullen, Viscount Rochford, which did wait upon the queen. This was a great grief unto the cardinal, as he that perceived aforehand, that the king would marry the said gentlewoman, if the divorce took place. Wherefore he began with all diligence to disappoint that match, which by reason of the misliking that he had to the woman, he judged ought to be avoided more than present death. While the matter stood in this state, and that the cause of the queen was to be heard and judged at Rome, by reason of the appeal which by her was put in, the cardinal required the pope, by letters and secret messengers, that, in anywise, he would defer the judgement of the divorce till he might frame the king's mind to his purpose. Howbeit, he went about nothing so secretly, but

that the same came to the king's knowledge, who took so high displeasure with such his cloaked dissimulation, that he determined to abase his degree, sith as an unthankful person he forgot himself and his duty towards him that had so highly advanced him to all honour and dignity."

The preceding quotation pleasingly exemplifies the propriety of the soliloquy which Shakspeare assigns to Wolsey.

" It shall be to the duchess of Alençon,
The French king's sister : he shall marry her. —
Anne Bullen ! No ; I'll no Anne Bullens for him :
There is more in it than fair visage. — Bullen !
No, we'll no Bullens. Speedily I wish
To hear from Rome.—The marchioness of Pembroke !

* * * * *

The late queen's gentlewoman ; a knight's daughter,
To be her mistress' mistress ! the queen's queen ! —
This candle burns not clear : 'tis I must snuff it ;
Then, out it goes. — " *

The endeavour to thwart this match was the primary cause of Wolsey's ruin, a subject which Shakspeare has perplexed by departure from historic truth. He had evidently, however, a correct view of the causes which led to the cardinal's decline from the favour of his imperious master, for, in reference to Anne Bullen, he makes Wolsey say,

* Act III. sc. 2.

“ There was the weight that pull’d me down.

O Cromwell,

The king has gone beyond me, all my glories

In that one woman I have lost for ever !” *

The assigning of Henry’s marriage to a period previous to the death of Wolsey, also marks the dramatist’s sense of the connection between that marriage and Wolsey’s fall. Wolsey died in 1530, and Henry did not marry Anne till 1532, yet Cromwell informs the cardinal,

“ that the lady Anne,

Whom the king hath in secrecy long married,

This day was view’d in open as his queen.” †

In the face, however, of his better knowledge, Shakspeare ascribed the king’s displeasure against Wolsey to the minister’s accidental enclosure to him of a letter on the subject of the divorce, which was intended for the pope, and an inventory of the wealth which the cardinal had amassed by his cupidity and extortion. No such circumstances ever occurred in the case of Wolsey; but Holinshed relates the incident of the inventory to have happened to Ruthall, bishop of Durham. The bishop was commanded by the king to make a book of the whole estate of the kingdom. Wolsey was directed to demand the account, and Ruthall desired his ser-

* Act III. sc. 2.

† Ibid.

vant to fetch the volume, bound in white vellum, from his study. Unfortunately the bishop's account of his private wealth was contained in a book of similar appearance, and the servant delivered that book to Wolsey. The historian adds, that Ruthall was so affected by the occurrence, that he shortly after died of grief. Ruthall's misfortune is perfectly credible; but that the crafty, politic, and cautious Wolsey should, with his own hands, consign the most damnatory evidence against himself to him whose frown could "make him nothing," is neither consistent with fact nor probability.

Every passage in the scene of Wolsey's degradation, from the entrance of Henry, till Norfolk*,

* Shakspeare has committed a curious error in the arrangement of these dramatis personæ. Holinshed says, "the king sent the two dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk." The poet adds "Surrey" with peculiar impropriety. The Duke of Norfolk appears in the first scene of the play, which represents the occurrences of 1521: that Duke of Norfolk died in 1525, and was succeeded in his title by Thomas Howard Earl of Surrey, who married the Duke of Buckingham's daughter: this is Shakspeare's Earl of Surrey, who, in the opening of the scene, in which the seals are demanded of Wolsey, says

" I am joyful

To meet the least occasion, that may give me

Remembrance of my father-in-law, the duke,

To be reveng'd on him." (Act III. sc. 2.)

But Wolsey did not resign the great seal till 1529, consequently Surrey was then Duke of Norfolk, and Shakspeare

Suffolk, and Surrey are sent to demand from the chancellor the delivery of the great seal, is Shakespeare's. Holinshed's narrative is then resumed, whence are taken the particulars of the cardinal's confinement to Asher House, his refusal to yield obedience to a verbal message from the king, and the confiscation of his property under judgment on a writ of *præmunire*. The principal charges against the cardinal are embodied in the vindictive dialogue which he holds with the noblemen who announce the completion of his ruin. From that moment the dramatist labours to exalt Wolsey in estimation: his first step is the mental superiority which he makes him maintain over his malignant enemies in their ungenerous assaults upon a fallen man. How skilful is his reply to the charge of incontinence:

“ How much, methinks, I could despise this man,
But that I am bound in charity against it!”

When threatened with the recitation of his offences, and called upon to “blush and cry guilty,” how manly and dignified is his rejoinder:

“ Speak on, sir ;
I dare your worst objections : if I blush,
It is to see a nobleman want manners.”

made two representatives of the same person appear on the stage at once.

Holinshed remarks, that Wolsey was “never happy till his overthrow, wherein he showed such moderation, and ended so perfectly, that the hour of his death did him more honour than all the pomp of his life past.” In the place of this bald notice, Shakspeare has thrown out a long strain of eloquent reflection which impressively marks the cardinal’s conviction of the vanity, vexation, and inutility of a life devoted to projects of ambition. Subdued to the common feelings of humanity, his interview with Cromwell is affecting; his frequent mention of the king with expressions of love, respect, and duty, operates very powerfully in his favour, by inducing a belief of his sincere attachment to his sovereign. One passage, indeed, is opposed to this remark :

“ Had I but serv’d my God with half the zeal
I serv’d my king, he would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies.”

This is a direct charge of ingratitude against the king: it was copied almost literally from Holinshed. “If I had served God as diligently as I have done the king, he would not have given me over in my grey hairs.”

The death of the great child of honour is narrated, not exhibited, in the drama.* Shakspeare

* Act IV. sc. 2.

gives two characters of the cardinal, one by Queen Katharine, embodying all that can justly be alleged against him; the other by Griffith, which is an equally fair summary of Wolsey's merits.* In both cases, Shakspeare's authority was Holinshed.

“ This cardinal was of a great stomach, for he counted himself equal with princes, and by crafty suggestion got into his hands innumerable treasure: he forced little on simony, and was not pitiful, and stood affectionate in his own opinion: in open presence he would lie and say untruth, and was double both in speech and meaning: he would promise much and perform little: he was vicious of his body, and gave the clergy evil example.”

Here it will be observed, that Shakspeare has not much improved his original, but on the fairer side of the medal he has thrown many graces. Holinshed never fancied the beautiful image by which the poet has described the comparative duration of men's good and evil fame; nor had he feeling enough for the thought that the university of Ipswich fell, because it was *unwilling* to outlive the good that raised it.

“ This cardinal was a man undoubtedly born

* Act IV. sc. 2.

to honour: I think some prince's bastard, no butcher's son; exceeding wise, fair spoken, high minded, full of revenge, vicious of his body, lofty to his enemies were they never so big, to those that accepted and sought his friendship wonderful courteous, a ripe schoolman, thrall to affections, brought a bed with flattery, insatiable to get, and more princely in bestowing, as appeareth by his two colleges at Ipswich and Oxenford, the one overthrown with his fall, the other unfinished. He held and enjoyed at once the bishopricks of York, Duresme, and Winchester, the dignities of the lord cardinal, legate, and chancellor, the abbey of Albans, divers priories, sundry fat benefices in commendam. A great preferer of his servants, an advancer of learning, stout in every quarrel, never happy till his overthrow; wherein he showed such moderation and ended so perfectly, that the hour of his death did him more honour than all the pomp of his life passed."

Shakspeare has bestowed much pains on the exaltation of Queen Katharine into interest and importance. With these views she is first exhibited high in the affection of the king, her husband, and, contrary to the truth of history, exerting her influence for the redress of the grievances attendant on Wolsey's illegal issue of

commissions.* The Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, were the persons who on this occasion acted as mediators between the king and the disturbed commons.† The presence of the queen at the examination of Buckingham's surveyor is equally without authority. Shakspeare cautiously restrains her from active participation in the proceedings, but assigns her a few sentences indicative of the piety and humanity by which he wished to characterise her.

The next appearance of the queen is under a sad reverse of fortune; the victim of a tyrant's caprice, she now herself needs the protection she had lately afforded others. The speech assigned her by the poet, when she is summoned to appear in a court where the legality of her marriage with Henry was to be debated‡, is copied as literally from Holinshed as the transfusion of a prose oration into blank verse would admit of. The fine opening of the queen's objection against Wolsey as a judge in her cause, is Shakspeare's, and powerfully supports the impression the poet was solicitous to produce in her favour :

“ Sir,

I am about to weep ; but, thinking that

* Act I. sc. 2.

† Holinshed.

‡ Act II. sc. 4.

We are a queen (or long have dream'd so), certain
 The daughter of a king, my drops of tears
 I'll turn to sparks of fire."*

The challenge which immediately follows, is from Holinshed. "The queen, in presence of the whole court, most grievously accused the cardinal of untruth, deceit, wickedness, and malice, which had sown dissention betwixt her and the king her husband; and therefore openly protested, that she did utterly abhor, refuse, and forsake such a judge, as was not only a most malicious enemy to her, but also a manifest adversary to all right and justice, and therewith did she appeal unto the pope, committing her whole cause to be judged of him."

The dignified departure of the queen from the court, in the play, would naturally give rise to the idea that it was contrived by a dramatic writer, but the passage stands nearly the same in history. "The king being advertised that she was ready to go out of the house, commanded the crier to call her again, who called her by these words; Katharine Queen of England come into the court. With that (quoth master Griffith) madam, you be called again. On, on, (quoth she) it maketh no matter, I will

* Act II. sc. 4.

not tarry, go on your ways. And thus she departed without any farther answer at that time, or any other, and never would appear after in any court.”

The entire arrangement of the first scene of the third act is taken from Holinshed, as are also the forcible objections made by Katharine against the probability of her obtaining justice in an English court. Shakspeare considerably lengthened the dialogue with the particular view of exciting sympathy in favour of the queen, who is beautifully and poetically depicted as

“ Shipwreck'd upon a kingdom, where no pity,
No friends, no hope, no kindred weep for me,
Almost no grave allow'd me ; — Like the lily,
That once was mistress of the field, and flourish'd,
I'll hang my head, and perish.”

The remaining steps in the accomplishing of Henry's divorce from his consort are confined in the drama to narration ; and Katharine appears no more till the memorable scene of her death, an event which Shakspeare was necessarily led to anticipate by the desire of closing his play with the joyful christening of Elizabeth : this princess was born in 1533, and Katharine did not die till 1535-6.

The extent of Shakspeare's obligations to the

historian is marked by the following extract from the Chronicles. "The Princess-Dowager lying at Kimbalton, fell into her last sickness, whereof the king being advertised, appointed the Emperor's ambassador, that was legier here with him, named Eustachius Caputius, to go to visit her, and to do his commendations to her, and will her to be of good comfort. The ambassador with all diligence did his duty therein, comforting her the best he might: but she within six days after, perceiving herself to wax very weak and feeble, and to feel death approaching at hand, caused one of her gentlewomen to write a letter to the king, commending to him her daughter and his, beseeching him to stand good father unto her; and further desired him to have some consideration for her gentlewomen that had served her, and to see them bestowed in marriage. Further, that it would please him to appoint that her servants might have their due wages, and a year's wages beside. This in effect was all that she requested, and so immediately hereupon she departed this life the eighth of January at Kimbalton aforesaid, and was buried at Peterborough."

Such were Shakspeare's historical materials in accomplishing one of his greatest triumphs in the excitement of pathetic feeling. The calm con-

fidence of a christian spirit, on the point of returning to heaven, was never more affectingly displayed than in the dramatic history of Katharine. Her forgiveness of enemies, and her affectionate solicitude for friends, are happily conjoined to the meekest piety. Hurl'd from the proud pre-eminence of a regal seat, by an act of wanton cruelty, the humiliation of the queen involved in it no degradation of character, for she was a faultless sufferer. With the greatest propriety, therefore, Katharine appears equally dignified in her humble, as in her exalted station ; and how beautifully she exemplifies her solicitude for a good name after death :

“ When I am dead, good wench,
 Let me be us'd with honour ; strew me over
 With maiden flowers, that all the world may know
 I was a chaste wife to my grave : embalm me,
 Then lay me forth : although unqueen'd, yet like
 A queen, and daughter to a king, inter me.” *

Holinshed's account of the divorce of Katharine is apologetical for Henry : the good man apparently believed that “ the king sore lamented his chance, and made no manner of mirth nor pastime as he was wont to do.” Shakspeare so far conforms to this represen-

* Act. IV. sc. 2.

tation of the case, as to make the king's scruple of conscience the avowed cause of the dissolution of his marriage; but the poet was too much a man of the world to be imposed on by such a thin disguise, and very archly displays his knowledge of the real motives which influenced Henry to cast away "a jewel that had hung for twenty years about his neck, yet never lost her lustre."*

The second scene of the play exhibits Katharine in the full enjoyment of her husband's love, and participation in his power; but ere the first act closes, the king had held "the fairest hand he ever touched."† The image of Anne Bullen was impressed upon his heart; and he, for the first time, acknowledged the omnipotence of beauty.‡ His devotion is expressed by the exaltation of the lady into the Marchioness of Pembroke, and "the gift of a thousand pound a year §;" and in the mean time the king's conscience becomes troubled, by a doubt he never knew before, respecting the legality of his marriage with Katharine; and he is reconciled to the resignation of the "queen of earthly queens." || "Alas!" says the poor lady,

* Act II. sc. 2.

† Sc. IV.

‡ "O beauty, till now I never knew thee."

§ Act II. sc. 3.

|| Act II. sc. 1, 2, 4.

“ I am old * ; ” a lamentation sadly contrasted by the praises bestowed upon her rival :

“ Believe me, sir, she is the goodliest woman
That ever lay by man.”

* * *

“ Sir, as I have a soul, she is an angel ;
Our king has all the Indies in his arms,
And more, and richer, when he strains that lady :
I cannot blame his conscience.” †

Shakspeare copied from Holinshed all the artful glosses by which Henry sought to conceal the odiousness of his conduct ; still, however, leaving sufficiently legible traces of his hypocrisy. With every prospect before him of a speedy dissolution of his matrimonial tie, it is his question : —

“ Would it not grieve an able man, to leave
So sweet a bedfellow ? But, conscience, conscience,
O, 'tis a tender place, and I must leave her.” †

Yet, so anxious is he to slip his yoke that the least symptom of delay alarms and vexes him :

“ I may perceive
These cardinals trifle with me : I abhor
This dilatory sloth, and tricks of Rome,
My learn'd and well-beloved servant, Cranmer,
Pr'ythee, return ! with thy approach, I know,
My comfort comes along.” §

* Act III. sc. 1.

† Act IV. sc. 1.

‡ Act II. sc. 2.

§ Act II. sc. 4.

Cranmer does return, and is the bearer of opinions which

——— “satisfied the king for his divorce,
 Together with all famous colleges
 Almost in Christendom: shortly, I believe,
 His second marriage shall be publish'd, and
 Her coronation.”*

As the play made its appearance in the lifetime of Elizabeth, Shakspeare had a task to perform of great delicacy. Elizabeth was not a princess with whom the liberty could be safely taken of exhibiting her father in all his native deformity. The poet contrived, therefore, without altogether suppressing the harshness, tyranny, and impetuosity which distinguished him, to create an impression generally favourable to his character. The bluntness of his manner is humorous and pleasing; carrying with it a large portion of apparent goodnature, kind feeling, and general integrity of intention. The measure of the divorce, indeed, speaks volumes against Henry; and his sacrifice of Buckingham hardly seems defensible. But in his quarrel with Wolsey he is clearly right; and his conduct to, and protection of, Cramner, is noble, generous, and wise. † For the particulars of this transaction, Shakspeare was not indebted to Ho-

* Act III. sc. 2.

† Act V. sc. 1, 2.

linshed, but to the acts and monuments of the christian martyrs by Fox, who minutely details the circumstances of the attempt of the privy council to crush the worthy Archbishop of Canterbury.

If the motives be obvious which led the poet to represent Henry in advantageous colours, they are even more so in the case of Anne Bullen, the mother of Elizabeth. She, accordingly, shines forth a perfect pattern of excelling nature.

Whilst the dramatist was anxious to excite pity for the fate of Katharine, it was no easy task to create an impression favourable to the person, who was the cause of all her unmerited misfortunes. Shakspeare artfully makes Anne unconscious of the king's intentions towards her; and she commiserates the fate, and expatiates on the virtues, of her unhappy mistress. By a natural transition, her reflections are turned on the advantages of humble life.

“ I swear, 'tis better to be lowly born,
 And range with humble livers in content,
 Than to be perk'd up in a glistening grief,
 And wear a golden sorrow.” *

The entire freedom of her mind from views or projects of ambition, and her consequent guilt-

* Act II. sc. 3.

lessness of injury against her on whose ruin she was raised, are strongly expressed in her declaration that she would not be a queen,

“ No, not for all the riches under heaven.”

Less, however tempted her.

Anne's reception of the king's profuse generosity is beautifully modest and graceful; and her after-reflection delicately expressive of the amiable feeling, that since her own elevation would occasion pain to her mistress, she looked on it with dread. *

A more seductive opportunity for the offer of homage at the shrine of Elizabeth's vanity could not have presented itself than this play afforded, and the poet has not neglected it. In addition to the indirect flattery of Elizabeth, through the medium of her father and mother, Shakspeare has plentifully offered the less delicate, but more acceptable, incense of personal compliment to his sovereign.

“ I have perus'd her† well;
Beauty and honour in her are so mingled,
That they have caught the king: and who knows yet,
But from this lady may proceed a gem,
To lighten all this isle? ‡

The compliment is subsequently repeated,

* Act II. sc. 3. † Anne Bullen. ‡ Act II. sc. 3.

though unrecommended by an added grace of variety of expression or expansion of the idea :

“ I persuade me, from her
Will fall some blessing to this land, which shall
In it be memoriz'd.” *

But the greatest and most effective effort is that which is made in the last scene, where Cranmer, in the spirit of prophecy, bursts forth into an eulogium of the future virtues of the princess whom he christens.

“ This royal infant, (heaven still move about her !)
Though in her cradle, yet now promises
Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings,
Which time shall bring to ripeness : she shall be
A pattern to all princes living with her,
And all that shall succeed : Sheba was never
More covetous of wisdom, and fair virtue,
Than this pure soul shall be : all princely graces
That mould up such a mighty piece as this is,
With all the virtues that attend the good,
Shall still be doubled on her : Truth shall nurse her,
Holy and heavenly thoughts still council her :
She shall be lov'd, and fear'd : Her own shall bless her :
Her foes shall shake like a field of beaten corn,
And hang their heads with sorrow : Good grows with
her !

In her days, every man shall eat in safety
Under his own vine, what he plants ; and sing
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours :
God shall be truly known ; and those about her

* Act III. sc. 2.

From her shall read the perfect ways of honour,
And by those claim their greatness, not by blood.
She shall be, to the happiness of England,
An aged princess ; many days shall see her,
And yet no day without a deed to crown it.
'Would I had known no more ! but she must die.
She must, the saints must have her ; yet a virgin,
A most unspotted lily shall she pass
To the ground, and all the world shall mourn her.

The passage is here quoted as it is supposed to have stood when the play first appeared, during the lifetime of Elizabeth. But, as the prophet wisely foresaw, she died ; and it happened that her successor was eminently serviceable to Shakspeare. The poet, in consequence, considered James entitled to honourable mention ; though he manifested no disposition to discharge his debt of gratitude, at the expense of any considerable trouble. A shorter method could scarcely have been hit upon, than that of foisting into Cranmer's prophecy respecting Elizabeth, a similar compliment to James. The break thus occasioned in the speech is greatly injurious to its effect by the disjunction of the natural connection between its parts, and the new matter is not recommended by sufficient novelty, truth, or beauty to atone for the awkwardness occasioned by its introduction.

It has been made a question, whether the pro-

logue and epilogue of this play were composed by Shakspeare, or additions made by another hand. If the solution of the question were possible, it is doubtful whether it would be worth the trouble, as the pieces are too unimportant to afford any insight into the mind of their author, whoever he might be. It has been also asserted, that another hand than Shakspeare's is discoverable in various passages of the dialogue. There may be truth in the supposition; but it is impossible to assume it as a fact without better evidence than mere conjecture.

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

1591.

THE plot of the Two Gentlemen of Verona is taken from the story of Felismena in the second book of the Diana, a Spanish pastoral romance, by George of Montemayor, translated into English by one Thomas Wilson.

Felix, the hero of the romance, prevails on the attendant of Felismena to convey a letter to her mistress. Felismena affects indignation and rebukes her maid for presumption. But the servant, readily penetrating her real sentiments, drops, as if by accident, the rejected letter in her presence. A short contest ensues between pride and curiosity: the latter of course prevails, and Felix receives assurances of the return of his passion by Felismena. The happiness of the lovers, however, is suddenly interrupted. The father of Felix determines he shall travel, telling his son, it is unfit that a youth of his noble ex-

traction should spend his time at home. Unable to support the pangs of absence, the unhappy Felismena follows her lover, concealed under the disguise of a page. She arrives at the court to which he had repaired, and is induced in the evening to bestow attention on some music: alas! it was the serenade of Felix to a beauty whose obduracy he was lamenting. Felismena does not betray herself, but, secure in her disguise, engages in the service of the perjured Felix: as his page, she is the bearer of letters, messages, and presents, to her rival.—All these incidents are copied by Shakspeare with circumstantial minuteness.

The romance proceeds to relate, that Celia, the new mistress of Felix, grew enamoured of his page, and that she died of grief when her love met not the return it pined for. Felix, in an agony of passion, fled in despair. The faithful Felismena pursued him, and was happy enough both to discover him, and to save his life. A reconciliation ensued, and Felix and Felismena were united. The first of these incidents, the passion of Celia for her lover's page, is wholly omitted in the play; the latter, the reconciliation and union of Felix with his first love, is adopted; and it appears likely, that the flight of Valentine and Silvia's pur-

suit of him, was likewise suggested by the romance.

Felix, a mere changeling in the Spanish story, is darkened by Shakspeare into a mean and despicable villain. Felix deserts his mistress, and this is "the head and front of his offending;" but Proteus, (Shakspeare's Felix) in addition, betrays his friend; he renounces Julia, having fallen in love, at a single interview, with Silvia, to whom Valentine is engaged by bonds of the most ardent affection.

" I will forget that Julia is alive,
Rememb'ring that my love to her is dead;
And Valentine I'll hold an enemy,
Aiming at Silvia as a sweeter friend."*

In conformity with this honourable resolution, he discloses the intended flight of Valentine and Silvia to the father of the lady, and thus obtains an opportunity of wooing her himself. His suit excites well-merited disgust. Silvia flies her father's court; Proteus pursues, and overtakes her in a forest, and crowns his crimes by a determination to violate her person. On the frustration of this design by the friend whom he had so deeply injured, the villain shelters his crimes under a trite expression of repentance, and a declaration, that

* Act II. sc. 6.

————— “ were man

But constant, he were perfect : that one error
 Fills him with faults ; makes him run through all sins :
 Inconstancy falls off, ere it begins :
 What is in Silvia's face, but I may spy
 More fresh in Julia's with a constant eye ?” *

The apology is deemed satisfactory: Proteus renews his vows to Julia, and his pardon is ratified by her hand.

The story in the romance is feeble, and Shakspeare's additional circumstances at the court of the duke give it no interest. His new characters are sketches rather than personifications of passion. Valentine is the contrast of Proteus. He has honour, courage, fidelity both in love and friendship ; but there is so little vividness and force in his character that he leaves no mark on our minds. Speed is a sketch of those servants who stand so prominent in modern comedy, with their wit on their master's amatory follies, and their reflections on their own love of eating and drinking and sleeping. His compeer, Launce, differs as much from Speed, and the crowd of similar characters that flourish in the old dramas, as if he were of a different race of beings. The romance affords no hint whatever for the cha-

* Act V. sc. 4.

racter, or, as it would be more properly stated, the characters of Launce and his dog. The master of this "cruel hearted cur" narrates his actions, interprets his thoughts, and explains his qualities, as of infinite importance, with ludicrous gravity; while his attachment to Crab, his description of the parting with his family, and his "catalogue of his mistress's conditions," give an extensive variety to the display of Launce's peculiarities.

The female characters are germs of much of that feminine excellence which Shakspeare loved, and which he so skilfully elaborated in many of his subsequent and more highly finished dramas. Both Silvia and Julia are amiable and affectionate, while the maiden coyness and deep passion of the latter are pleasingly contrasted by the wit and spirit of the former. In the novel, Felismina pleads with earnestness in behalf of the perjured Felix to his new mistress: Julia, on the contrary, artfully excites the compassion of Silvia in favour of Proteus' deserted love; a conduct far more in accordance with nature. Yet in *Twelfth Night* Shakspeare follows the course he here rejects: Viola pleads to her rival, Olivia, in favour of the duke, with an eloquent warmth even exceeding that of Felismina.

Altogether, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is

one of the lighter productions of Shakspeare, undistinguished by depth of pathos or power of imagination, yet containing much sweet and graceful poetry. The commencement of the play, Valentine's description of his friend *, his reflections on his solitary life †, are all distinguished by tenderness and elegance, while the versification is even more harmonious than most of the poetry of Shakspeare.

* Act II. sc. 4.

† "How use doth breed a habit in a man." Act V. sc. 4.

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS.

1592.

THE plot of the Comedy of Errors undoubtedly originated in the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, but it is not known through what channel Shakspeare became acquainted with his Latin authority. A translation of Plautus' play was printed in 1595, but if, as is generally said, the Comedy of Errors was written three years previously, its author could not have derived any assistance from the translation of "W. W." As, however, the chronology of the Comedy of Errors may be considered disputable, it is necessary to add, that between Shakspeare's play and the "pleasant and fine conceited comedy called *Menechmus*," there is an entire discordance in the names of the *dramatis personæ*, and a total absence of those coincidences of expression which proclaim Shakspeare a copier on other occasions.

The "Historie of Error" is the name of a piece enacted on new-year's night 1576-7, be-

fore Queen Elizabeth at Hampton-Court, but the play is no longer in existence. It is neither apparent, therefore, by what means Shakspeare obtained his knowledge of the plot of the *Menæchmi*, nor are any materials left to guide us in the enquiry, how far the deviations which his play exhibits from Plautus are to be attributed to himself, how far to the authority he followed. Since this subject is involved in so much obscurity, little can be effected towards the illustration of the play before us ; but it may afford gratification to a reasonable curiosity to contrast the translation of Plautus by W. W. (whom Wood calls William Warner) with the *Comedy of Errors*.

Both plays agree in ascribing twin sons to a merchant of Syracuse ; in separating them at seven years of age ; in conferring, after the loss of the elder, his name on the younger brother ; in sending the younger forth in search of his brother ; and in a series of mistakes arising out of their perfect similarity of feature and name. The cause which produced the separation of the brothers is stated differently : in *Menechmus* the elder is stolen ; in the *Comedy of Errors* he is supposed to be lost in a wreck.

The two plays differ in the scene of action. Shakspeare makes the elder brother a highly re-

spectable merchant of Ephesus; not “dwelling enriched” at Epidamnum. When, however, the younger brother, Antipholus of Syracuse, arrives at Ephesus, he gives himself out “of Epidamnum.”

Menechmus the citizen, and Antipholus of Ephesus, are both married to women of property, who are jealous of them; each goes to dine with a courtesan; each is shut out of doors by his wife, and each is believed by his relatives to be mad. A physician is sent for to Menechmus; a conjurer to Antipholus, who is actually bound with cords as a madman; whilst Menechmus only escapes similar treatment by the interference of the servant Messenio.

Menechmus the traveller, and Antipholus of Syracuse, are each mistaken by their brother's courtesan; the former is prevailed upon to go and dine with the lady; the latter accepts a similar invitation from his brother's wife. Menechmus of Epidamnum, gives his courtesan a gold chain, which he had stolen from his wife. Antipholus of Ephesus orders a similar ornament for his wife; but in a fit of anger, determines to make a present of it to his courtesan. In both cases, the chain falls into the hand of the travelling brother.

On the arrival of the travelling brothers, the

one in Epidamnum, the other in Ephesus, the several cities are described in odious colours. The idea is the same in each play; but the descriptions are too decidedly different for one to have originated from the other.

The characters of a parasite, and father-in-law of Menechmus of Epidamnum, have no existence in the Comedy of Errors.

The incidents in the Comedy of Errors, not found in Menechmus, are, the introduction of the father and mother of the twin brothers; the sister-in-law of Antipholus of Ephesus, with whom Antipholus of Syracuse falls in love; and the duplication of the original plot in the persons of the two Dromios. In Menechmus, the traveller is accompanied by a servant, Messenio. In the Comedy of Errors, each of the brothers has a servant; and these servants, like their masters, are twins, so perfectly resembling each other, that they are not to be known apart: a new source of error and confusion is thus opened, where most readers will be inclined to believe enough existed before. Notwithstanding this accumulation of perplexities, the scenes are conducted with infinite skill and ingenuity, and the play brought to a clear and satisfactory conclusion.

The introduction of Ægeon, the father of the Antipholus', enables Shakspeare to dispense

with the "Argument" attached to the Menechmus; an equally satisfactory reason cannot be assigned for the presence of Æmilia, his wife. Improbability only is added, by the alteration of the causes of the separation of the brothers. The change of the younger brother's name by an affectionate grandfather, anxious to perpetuate the name of a darling child, is perfectly natural in Menechmus. The change is made in the Comedy of Errors; but all mention of the occasion is neglected. It is left equally unaccounted for, how the Dromios became possessed of the same name.

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

1594.

THE scene of Love's Labour's Lost is laid in Navarre. The king retires to a secluded palace with his nobility, vowing to dedicate the three ensuing years to study; to admit no woman within the precincts of his court; to debar himself entirely from female society; and to live in the strictest abstinence from every personal indulgence. Unfortunately, for letters and mortification, the princess of France arrives on an embassy from her father; a circumstance necessarily leading to an interview between the fair ambassadress and the secluded king. His majesty falls in love with the princess; his lords with her attendants; and thus sacrifice their vows at the shrine of beauty. Each of the ladies imposes on her lover a penance for his perjury, the performance of which is to entitle him to her hand; and with this understanding the play closes.

Love's Labour's Lost is one of the very few plays of its author that are not ascertained to have been founded on some previously existing work. Its incidents, however, are so simple, and in such entire conformity with the chivalric and romantic feeling of the sixteenth century, that they would readily present themselves to any mind imbued with the fashionable literature of the age.

The play is rich and spirited in dialogue, and full of the poetry of fancy. Many of its observations have passed into sentences, though the drama itself has fallen into neglect. Biron is still referred to as the character of a genuine wit.

“ Another of these students at that time
Was there with him : if I have heard a truth,
Biron they call him ; but a merrier man,
Within the limit of becoming mirth,
I never spent an hour's talk withal ;
His eye begets occasion for his wit ;
For every object that the one doth catch,
The other turns to a mirth-moving jest ;
Which his fair tongue (conceit's expositor,)
Delivers in such apt and gracious words,
That aged ears play truant at his tales,
And younger hearings are quite ravished ;
So sweet and voluble is his discourse.” *

* Act II. sc. 1.

In the coincidence of sparkling wit, and indulgence in somewhat bitter repartee, Rosalind may not unaptly be considered the first sketch of a character which the author fully embodied afterwards in Beatrice, as Biron was, undoubtedly, the precursor of Benedick.

Rosalind. “ Oft have I heard of you, my lord Biron,
 Before I saw you: and the world's large tongue
 Proclaims you for a man replete with mocks;
 Full of comparisons and wounding flouts;
 Which you on all estates will execute,
 That lie within the mercy of your wit.”*

Biron takes himself to task for falling in love so identically, in the spirit of Benedick, that his soliloquy might, with very slight variation, be transferred to the scenes of *Much Ado about Nothing*, without any injury to the keeping of that admirably delineated character.

“ O! — And I, forsooth, in love! I, that have been love's
 whip;
 A very beadle to a humorous sigh;
 A critick; nay, a night-watch constable;
 A domineering pedant o'er the boy,
 Than whom no mortal so magnificent!
 This wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy;
 This senior-junior, giant-dwarf, Dan Cupid;
 Regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms,

* Act V. sc. 2.

The anointed sovereign of sighs and groans,
 Liege of all loiterers and malcontents,

* * * *

Sole imperator and great general
 Of trotting paritors, — O my little heart! —
 And I to be a corporal of his field,
 And wear his colours like a tumbler's hoop!
 What? I! I love! I sue! I seek a wife!
 A woman, that is like a German clock,
 Still a repairing; ever out of frame;
 And never going aright, being a watch,
 But being watch'd that it still may go right?
 Nay, to be perjur'd, which is worst of all;
 And among three, to love the worst of all;
 A whitely wanton with a velvet brow,
 With two pitch balls stuck in her face for eyes;
 Ay, and, by heaven, one that will do the deed,
 Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard:
 And I to sigh for her! to watch for her!
 To pray for her! Go to; it is a plague
 That Cupid will impose for my neglect
 Of his almighty dreadful little might.
 Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue, and groan;
 Some men must love my lady, and some Joan.*

The pedant, Holofernes, is very happily conceived and executed, but it is to be doubted whether Shakspeare has not been too liberal to the literary coxcomb in assigning to him what Johnson was contented to receive as a perfect definition of colloquial excellence: "Your reasons at dinner have been sharp and sententious, witty without affectation, audacious without im-

puddency, learned without opinion, and strange without heresy." * It can hardly be imagined that conversation which merited this elegant eulogium, and such insufferable nonsense as the following could proceed from the same mouth:

Nath. — " Sir, I assure ye, it was a buck of the first head.

Hol. Sir Nathaniel, *haud credo*.

Dull. 'Twas not a *haud credo*, 'twas a pricket.

Hol. Most barbarous intimation! yet a kind of insinuation, as it were, *in via*, in way of explication; *facere*, as it were, replication, or, rather, *ostentare*, to show, as it were, his inclination, — after his undressed, unpolished, uneducated, unpruned, untrained, or rather unlettered, or, ratherest, unconfirmed, fashion, — to insert again my *haud credo* for a deer.

Dull. I said, the deer was not a *haud credo*; 'twas a pricket.

Hol. Twice sod simplicity, *bis coctus!* — O thou monster ignorance, how deformed dost thou look!" †

The poetical vice of the time, the love of alliteration, is very happily ridiculed in Holofernes' sonnet, wherein he " something affects the letter, for it argues facility." ‡ The scraps of Latin and Italian which he vomits forth on all occasions are transcribed principally from the works of Florio, a contemporary, who shared

* Act V. sc. 1.

† Act IV. sc. 2.

‡ " The praiseful princes pierced and prick'd a pretty pleasing pricket." — Act IV. sc. 2.

with the dramatist the patronage of Lord Southampton.

The comedy is rich in diversity of character ; and next steps forward into notice Don Adriano de Armado,

——— “ a refined traveller of Spain,
A man in all the world's new fashion planted,
That hath a mint of phrases in his brain :
One, whom the musick of his own vain tongue
Doth ravish like enchanting harmony ;
A man of compliments, whom right and wrong
Have chose as umpire of their mutiny.”*

One additional quotation will place the reader in perfect possession of this gentleman's various excellencies :

“ Sir, the king is a noble gentleman ; and my familiar, I do assure you, very good friend : — For what is inward between us, let it pass : — I do beseech thee, remember thy courtesy ; — I beseech thee apparel thy head ; — and among other importunate and most serious designs, — and of great import indeed too ; — but let that pass : — for I must tell thee, it will please his grace (by the world) sometime to lean upon my poor shoulder ; and with his royal finger, thus, dally with my excrement, with my mustachio : but, sweet heart, let that pass. By the world, I recount no fable ; some certain special honours it pleaseth his greatness to impart to Armado, a soldier, a man of travel, that hath seen the world : but let that pass. — The very all of all is, — but, sweet heart, I do implore secrecy.” †

* Act I. sc. 1.

† Act V. sc. 1.

But the remark of Holofernes is already justified :

“ He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument.”*

Yet with all its diversity of characters, poetic beauties, wit, and sentences, *Love's Labour's Lost* is but little regarded. It is devoid of dramatic interest, and not even the fairest and freshest beauties of Shakspeare's genius can compensate for poverty of plot and deficiency of action.

* Act V. sc. 1.

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

1594.

FEW plays consist of such incongruous materials as “A Midsummer-Night’s Dream.” It comprises no less than four histories:— that of Theseus and Hippolyta; — of the four Athenian lovers; — the actors; — and the fairies. It is not indeed absolutely necessary to separate Theseus and Hippolyta from the lovers; nor the actors from the fairies; but the link of connection is extremely slender. Nothing can be more irregularly wild than to bring into contact the Fairy-mythology of modern Europe, and the early events of Grecian history; or to introduce Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, and Starveling, “hard-handed men, which never laboured in their minds till now,” as amateur actors in the classic city of Athens.

Of the characters constituting the serious action of this play Theseus and Hippolyta are

entirely devoid of interest. Lysander and Demetrius, and Hermia and Helena, scarcely merit notice except on account of the frequent combination of elegance, delicacy, and vigour, in their complaints, lamentations, and pleadings, and the ingenuity displayed in the management of their cross-purposed love through three several changes. In the first place, there is a mutual passion between Lysander and Hermia: Demetrius loves Hermia, he having previously loved Helena, who returned his love. In the second stage, Lysander deserts Hermia, and urges his suit to Helena, who remains faithful to Demetrius; and, thirdly, Lysander disclaims his love for Helena, and renews his vows to his first love, Hermia; Demetrius relinquishes Hermia, and renews his affection for Helena.

Bottom and his companions are probably highly drawn caricatures of some of the monarchs of the scene whom Shakspeare found in favour and popularity when he first appeared in London, and in the bickerings, jealousies, and contemptible conceits which he has represented, we are furnished with a picture of the green-room politics of the Globe.

After perusing any half-dozen dramas of the early part of Elizabeth's reign, we can readily concur with Steevens, in thinking that

the doggerel nonsense of Bottom and his worthies, is only an extract from "the booke of Perymus and Thesbye," printed in 1562. The conjecture, however, is equally plausible, that Shakspeare emulated the style in which the story of these unhappy lovers is narrated in the fourth book of Golding's version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

"Within the towne of whose huge walles so monstrous
 high and thick,
 (The fame is givon Semyramis for making them of bricke,)
 Dwelt hard together two young folke in houses joynd so
 nere
 That under all one roofe well nigh both twayne convayed
 were.
 The name of him was Pyramus and Thisbe call'd was she,
 So faire a man in all the East was none alive as he.
 Nor nere a woman, mayde nor wife, in beautie like to her."

Manifold are the opinions that have been advanced respecting the origin of the fairy mythology of our ancestors. The superstitions of the East and of the North, and of Greece and of Rome have been resorted to in search of a clue which would lead to a consistent history of its rise and growth.

It appears safe to assume that the oriental genii in general, and the Dews and Peries of Persia in particular, are the remote prototypes of modern fairies. The doctrine of the existence

of this peculiar race of spirits was imported into the north of Europe by the Scythians, and it forms a leading feature in the mythology of the Celts. Hence was derived the popular fairy-system of our own country, which our ancestors modified by the mythology of the classics.

The Peries and Dews of the orientals were paralleled by the Scandinavian division of their genii, or diminutive supernatural beings, with which their imaginations so thickly peopled the earth, into bright or beneficent elves, and black or malignant dwarfs; the former beautiful, the latter hideous in their aspect. A similar division of the fairy tribe of this country was long made, but, by almost imperceptible degrees, the qualities of both species were ascribed to fairies generally. They were deemed intermediate between mankind and spirits; but still as they partook decidedly of a spiritual nature, they were, like all other spirits, under the influence of the devil; but their actions were more mischievous than demonical, more perplexing than malicious, more frolicsome than seriously injurious. Possessing material bodies, they had all the wants and passions of human nature: being spiritual, they had the power of making themselves invisible, and of passing through the smallest aperture.

Of the diminutiveness of these interesting

sprites, Shakspeare presents a pleasing idea, by his representation of them as in danger of being overwhelmed by the bursting of a honey-bag newly gathered from the bee*; as seeking refuge from peril in the beds of acorn cups†; and as, in comparison with the cowslip, short in stature‡; but he has left it to the imagination to paint that unfading and unalterable beauty of form and feature for which they were celebrated, and to clothe them in the tasteful apparel which they arranged and wore with matchless delicacy and grace. The long yellow ringlets that waved over their shoulders, were restrained from concealing the delicacy of their complexions, or the beauty of their brows, by combs of gold. A mantle of green cloth, inlaid with wild flowers, reached to their middle; green pantaloons, buttoned with tags of silk, and sandals of silver, formed their under-dress. On their shoulders hung quivers stored with pernicious arrows; and bows, tipped with gold, ready bent for warfare, were slung by their sides. Thus accoutred, they set forward on their perambulations, mounted on milk-white steeds, so exquisitely light of foot, that they left not the print of their hoofs on land newly ploughed, nor even dashed the dew from the cup of a harebell.

* Act IV. sc. 1.

† Act II. sc. 1.

‡ Ibid.

The employments assigned to these beautiful diminutives are at once appropriate and elegant. Of some, says Shakspeare, it is the business to seek “dew-drops,”

“ And hang a pearl in every cowslip’s ear * ;”

Of others, to

“ fetch jewels from the deep † ;”

Of

“ Some, to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds ;
Some war with rear-mice for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats ; and some keep back
The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots, and wonders
At our quaint spirits.” ‡

Titania’s commands are admirably adapted to the capabilities of the delicate and fragile forms on which they are laid ; the tasks she assigns them yielding delight in their performance :

“ Be kind and courteous to this gentleman ;
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes ;
Feed him with apricocks, and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries ;
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And; for night-tapers, crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm’s eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise ;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moon-beams from his sleeping eyes. §

The government of fairy-land was strictly

* Act II. sc. 1.

† Act III. sc. 1.

‡ Act II. sc. 3.

§ Act III. sc. 1.

monarchical. Oberon and Mab*, the king and queen, resided in an elegant palace formed of mother-of-pearl, ivory, spices, precious stones, jewels, and gold. They maintained a splendid court and numerous retinue, and were strict in the exaction of tend and duty from their subjects. The plan of his drama must have been entirely different to have enabled Shakspeare to exhibit Oberon and Titania amidst this splendid mockery of terrestrial magnificence; and he has placed them, with perfect propriety, in the recesses of rural obscurity. The description of the "close and consecrated bower" dedicated to the repose of Titania, is conceived in the perfect spirit of fairy beauty, and profuse in luxuriant sweetness.

" A bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows;
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine:

* The names Oberon and Mab were so universally used as the appellatives of the king and queen of Fairy, that a reason is naturally asked for Shakspeare's preference of Titania for the latter, especially as he has called the queen by her proper name in *Romeo and Juliet*, in the elegant told tale of Mab, her equipage, and exploits, "Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep." The reader will probably be satisfied that it arose from the conjunction of Titania and Oberon in a dramatic entertainment exhibited before Queen Elizabeth in 1591.

There sleeps Titania, sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight ;
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in."*

It was a principal delight of fairies to

“ meet in grove or green,
By fountain clear, and spangled star-light sheen.” †

* * *

“ On hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or on the beached margent of the sea,
To dance their ringlets to the whistling wind.” ‡

Almost every meadow exhibits specimens of fairy circles, which are ringlets of grass, higher, sourer, and of a deeper green than the grass immediately surrounding them : their description in the Tempest, as

“ green-sour ringlets whereof the ewe bites not §,”

is founded on extreme accuracy of remark. The midnight frolicks of the fairies parched up the grass whereon they danced, and the luxuriant verdure of their orbs was the effect of their care to repair the injury they had caused by refreshing them with moisture, an office assigned to one of Titania's attendants :

“ And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.” ||

* Act II. sc. 2. † Act II. sc. 1. ‡ Act II. sc. 2.
§ Act V. sc. 1. || Act II. sc. 1.

As the power of the magician was absolute within his circle, so was the fairy irresistible within her ring. It was thought dangerous for cattle to encroach on her boundaries, and when the damsels of old gathered dew from the grass for the improvement of their complexions, they left undisturbed such as they perceived on fairy rings, apprehensive that by subjecting themselves to their power, the fairies would maliciously destroy their beauty.

Of all spirits it was peculiar to fairies to be actuated by the feelings and passions of mankind. The loves, jealousies, quarrels, and caprices of the dramatic king, give a striking exemplification of this infirmity. Oberon is by no means backward in the assertion of supremacy over his royal consort, who, to do her justice, is as little disposed, as any earthly beauty, tacitly to acquiesce in the pretensions of her redoubted lord. But, knowledge, we have been gravely told, is power, and the animating truth is exemplified by the issue of the contest between Oberon and Titania: his majesty's acquaintance with the secret virtues of herbs and flowers, compels the wayward queen to yield what neither love nor duty could force from her.

Let it not be too hastily inferred from the

diminutiveness of these testy beings, that their quarrels are indifferent to the sons of men. Alas! mortals know not how deep is their interest in the domestic harmony of the fairy court!

Shakspeare has given an elegant summary of the calamities believed to be attendant on the dissensions of the king and queen of Fairy: the winds,

“ As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
 Contagious fogs; which falling in the land,
 Have every pelting river made so proud,
 That they have overborne their continents:
 The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
 The ploughman lost his sweat; and the green corn
 Hath rotted, ere his youth attain'd a beard:
 The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
 And crows are fatted with the murrain flock;
 The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud;
 And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,
 For lack of tread, are undistinguishable:
 The human mortals want their winter here;
 No night is now with hymn or carol blest:—
 Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
 Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
 That rheumatick diseases do abound:
 And thorough this distemperature, we see
 The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;
 And on old Hyems' chin, and icy crown,
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
 Is, as in mockery, set: The spring, the summer,
 The chiding autumn, angry winter, change

Their wonted liveries ; and the 'mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which :
*And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension ;
We are their parents and original."*

Not of such an awful nature, however, were all the evils to which the human race were subjected by the quarrels or malignity of fairies. It was an inconvenience, indeed, that they intruded nightly into dwelling houses, and revenged any neglect of the domestics to provide clean water for their ablutions, or bread and milk for their repast, by skimming the bowls set for cream, obstructing the operation of butter making, and interfering with the working of the beer. But these nocturnal visits were not without corresponding advantages. Particularly attached to cleanliness, the fairies rewarded good servants by dropping money into their shoes, and rings into the pail, by sweeping the house, grinding the corn, threshing the wheat, and carding the wool : with exemplary justice, they punished the sluttish by pinches till they were black and blue, and sore from head to foot ; invisible hands stripped the bed-clothes from the sluggard, and then, as Robin Goodfellow says in the old ballad,

“ ’Twixt sleep and wake
 I do them take,
 And on the key-cold floor them throw.”

A respectful attention to their wants and inclinations, however, never failed to propitiate their good will, which, as a last act of favour, they displayed by conferring a blessing on the house and its inhabitants. It is with this friendly feeling that Puck proclaims of Theseus' dwelling —

“ not a mouse
 Shall disturb this hallow'd house :
 I am sent with broom, before,
 To sweep the dust behind the door.”

And Oberon commands,

“ Through this house give glimmering light,
 By the dead and drowsy fire :
 Every elf, and fairy sprite,
 Hop as light as bird from brier.”

* * *

“ With this field-dew consecrate,
 Every fairy take his gait ;
 And each several chamber bless,
 Through this palace with sweet peace :
 Ever shall in safety rest,
 And the owner of it blest.”*

Nor less important is to be reckoned their attendance on the night of the nuptials of their favourites, for purposes which the poet very perspicuously describes :

* Act V. sc. 2.

“ To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be ;
And the issue there create,
Shall be ever fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be :
And the blots of nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand ;
Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious, such as are
Despised in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.”*

Among other encroachments of the clergy upon the province of spiritual agents, was that of taking into their own hands this charitable deed of the fairies ; and, completely to turn the tables on those whose rivals they made themselves : the pretext of the priests was, that pious exorcisms were necessary to dissipate the illusions of the very spirits whose actions they emulated ! No poet had ever a keener insight into these matters than Chaucer, and he is exquisitely happy in his ridicule of the clergy's absurd and ambitious substitution of themselves in the place of the fairies :

“ I speke of many hundred yeres agoe,
But now can no man see non elves mo.
For now the grete Charite and Prayers
Of Limitours and other holy freres,

* Act V. sc. 2.

That serchen every lond and every streme,
As thicke as motes in the sunne beme.”

* * * *

“This maketh that there ben no fairies,
For there as wont to walken was an elfe,
There walketh now the Limitour himself,
And as he goeth in his Limitacioune,
Wymen may now goe safely up and downe,
In every bush and under every tree,
There nis none other Incubus but he.”*

To a belief in magic, witchcraft, and the agency of spirits, was always superadded that of the power of charms both to create love, and cause infidelity and hatred. The singular tergiversations of the lovers Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena, are all effects of such a power: the love of Titania for Bottom, with his ass's head, is a similar instance, and it was, doubtless, by the same means that the queen had led Theseus

“ through the glimmering night,
From Perigenia, whom he ravished;
And made him with fair Æglé break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiopa.” †

The whole circle of poetry does not contain a passage richer in poetical beauties and of sweeter versification, than that wherein Shakespeare describes the power of the heart's-ease

* Wife of Bath's Tale. † Act IV. sc. 1. Act II. sc. 2.

to create love. Elizabeth never received a more graceful compliment.

“Thou remember'st

Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back,
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea maid's music.
That every time I saw (but thou could'st not)
Flying between the cold moon and the earth
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal, throned by the west,
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow
As it should pierce an hundred thousand hearts.
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quencht in the chaste beams of the watery moon;
And the imperial vot'ress passed on
In maiden meditation, fancy free.
Yet, mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell;—
It fell upon a little western flow'r
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it “Love in Idleness.”

Among other mischievous propensities which were attributed to fairies, was that of stealing the unbaptized infants of mortals, and leaving their own progeny in their stead. Before they put a new-born child into the cradle, the Danish women were accustomed to place either there, or over the door, garlick, salt, bread, and also steel, or some cutting instrument made of that metal, as preventives against so great an evil. The child

of a pagan was lawful game for every waggish sprite, and, in a pilfering excursion to the East, Titania found no obstructions to her success from precautions similar to those of the northern matron. She had for her attendant

“ A lovely boy, stol'n from an Indian king ;
 She never had so sweet a changeling :
 And jealous Oberon would have the child
 Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild :
 But she, perforce, withholds the lovely boy,
 Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.” *

The poet has not left it to this exploit of Titania, nor to the return of Oberon “ from farthest steep of India †,” to proclaim that celerity of motion by which the fairies were distinguished. The king boasts that they

“ ————— the globe can compass soon,
 Swifter than the wand'ring moon.” ‡

Puck undertakes to

“ Put a girdle round about the earth
 In forty minutes || ;”

and the following lines seem almost to invest the fairy tribe with the power of ubiquity:

“ Over hill, over dale,
 Thorough bush, thorough brier,

* Act II. sc. 1. † Act II. sc. 2. ‡ Act IV. sc. 1.
 || Act II. sc. 2.

Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moon's sphere.*

The tribe of fairies generally was deemed mischievous, and Puck, Robin-Goodfellow, or Hobgoblin, as he was variously called, enjoyed the reputation of being the master-spirit of wickedness among them. Delighted by every combination of the preposterous, his never-wearying pursuit of mischief rendered his name universally terrific. If he met a person returning home at night, his delight was to lead him by a feigned voice out of his way: such is the exploit of Puck when he entangles Lysander and Demetrius in the mazes of a wood, and separates them from each other:

“Up and down, up and down;
I will lead them up and down:
I am fear'd in field and town;
Goblin, lead them up and down.”†

At other times he assumed the shape of an animal, making his metamorphosis the vehicle of a prank:

“Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;

* Act I. sc. 2.

† Act III. sc. 2.

And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.”*

The subject of darkness and night, as connected with the appearance of spirits, will demand so much of our attention in Hamlet, that nothing more is necessary here than to notice the several allusions to the same superstition in the present play.

“ Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf howls the moon ;
Whilst the heavy plowman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the scritch-owl, scritch-ing loud,
Puts the wretch, that lies in woe,
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night,
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide :
And we fairies that do run
By the triple Hecat's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolick.”†

It was an indication of the comparative purity of the fairies that they delighted most to celebrate their revels in “spangled star-light sheen,” or beneath the mild effulgence of the moon. But

* Act II. sc. 1.

† Act V. sc. 2.

the slight relation which they bore to demoniacal spirits is more decisively proclaimed, by the superior privilege they enjoyed of protracting their gambols till day-light actually broke upon them.

Puck. "My fairy lord, this must be done with haste ;
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger ;
At whose approach, ghosts wandering here and there,
Troop home to church-yards : damned spirits all,
That in cross-ways and floods have burial,
Already to their worm beds are gone ;
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They wilfully themselves exile from light,
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

Oberon. But we are spirits of another sort :
I with the morning's love have oft made sport ;
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt-green streams."*

An air of peculiar lightness distinguishes the poet's treatment of this extremely fanciful subject from his subsequent and bolder flights into the regions of the spiritual world. He rejected from the drama on which he engrafted it, every thing calculated to detract from its playfulness, or to encumber it with seriousness, and giving the rein to the brilliancy of youthful imagination,

he scattered, from his superabundant wealth, the choicest flowers of fancy over the fairies' paths : his fairies move amidst the fragrance of enameled meads, graceful, lovely, and enchanting. It is equally to Shakspeare's praise, that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is not more highly distinguished by the richness and variety, than for the propriety and harmony which characterises the arrangement of the materials out of which he constructed this vivid and animated picture of fairy mythology.

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.

1596.

THE idea of conveying a person in his sleep to scenes entirely new to him, which is the plot of the Induction to this play, is of oriental origin. The adventures of Abou Hassan, whose credulity was practised on by the caliph Haroun Alraschid, are familiar to every reader of the Arabian-Nights; and scarcely less known, since the appearance of Mr. Marsden's translation of Marco Polo, is the deception of Alo-eddin, who, under the influence of sleeping potions, frequently had young men of his court removed into secluded palaces and gardens inhabited by beautiful and accomplished damsels. In this scene of delight they were permitted to revel for several days, till, again influenced by a soporific, they were reconveyed to their own habitations. Alo-eddin then persuaded them that they had

been for a time translated, by his power, to the realms of Paradise.*

In the European world the story has assumed a less romantic form, nay, it has even made its appearance under the grave authority of the historian, and is related as true by Heuterust, of Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy; and by Sir Richard Barckley‡, of the Emperor Charles the Fifth.

From Heuterus the story was translated into French, and may be seen in Goulart's *Histoires Admirables*, and it also found its way into a collection of stanzas in prose, "sett forth by Maister Richard Edwards, mayster of her Majestie's revels," and printed in the year 1570. The story was popular with our ancestors, and appeared again, somewhat changed in fashion, in the *Admirable and Memorable histories of E. Grimstone*, in 1607. The general circumstances of the tale are these:—

Philip, walking one night through the streets of Bruxelles, finds a mechanic drunk, and sleeping soundly on the stones. The duke causes him to be taken up, carried to his palace, laid on one of his richest beds, and entirely re-clothed. When the

* Book I. ch. 21.

† *Rerum Burgund.* Lib. 4.

‡ *A Discourse on the Felicitie of Man.* 1598.

drunkard awakes he is surrounded with attendants, who, with studied respect, ask him if it be his pleasure to rise, and what apparel he will wear. Amazed at such courtesy, and doubting the evidence of his senses, he calmly acquiesces. All day he is treated with the greatest ceremony, and gratified with every enjoyment wealth can furnish. In the evening a play is represented before him; a banquet follows, and night witnesses his relapse into a drunkenness, as sense-absorbing as that in which the duke had first discovered him. Hereupon he is disrobed of all his rich attire, re-dressed in his rags, and carried to the place whence he had been taken. Awakening in the morning he begins to remember what had happened; he cannot distinguish between realities and fancies, but in the end he concludes that all was but a dream, and relates the vision to his wife.

In 1594, a play called the Taming of *a* Shrew was entered on the books of the Stationer's Company. Like Shakspeare's Taming of *the* Shrew, the Taming of *a* Shrew has its Induction; and the Induction, in each case, opens with the ejection of Sly from an alehouse. Shakspeare has merely substituted a "Hostess" for a "Tapster." The lord who finds the drunkard is, in both plays, just returned from hunting, and gives his di-

rections for Sly's disposal with great minuteness. Every preparation being completed to insure the deception and confusion of Sly, even to the disguise of the lord's page, who is to personate Sly's wife, the tinker at length awakes in the midst of splendour, and surrounded with attendants. True to nature, his first demand is

“ ——— a little small ale :”*

“ For God's sake, a pot of small ale.” †

In order to establish a belief in Sly's mind that he is really a lord, the same method is pursued in both plays: the obsequious attendants offer the choice, and immediate enjoyment of every luxury: in some instances, with remarkable similarity of expression.

The conviction of the tinker that he was “ a lord indeed,” is succeeded by the introduction of a company of players, when the comedy of the Taming of the Shrew commences. At the conclusion of the first scene of the first act, Shakspeare puts a few words into the mouth of Sly, and from that period notices him no further; whilst, in the old play, Sly's interference is frequent; and at the conclusion, having relapsed into his former state of drunkenness, he is removed from the scene, placed in the situation

* Taming of a Shrew.

† Shakspeare.

in which he was first found ; and on his return to sobriety, perfectly convinced that all that had passed was merely an idle dream.

The advantages of wealth and the enjoyments of luxury are displayed by Shakspeare with gorgeous magnificence, and form a striking contrast to the meagre outline of the preceding play. The absurdities of the drunkard, also, in his new situation, are admirably selected and developed ; and hence the vast superiority of our author's Induction over that of his predecessor.

Notwithstanding some discordances, the plots of the Taming of *the* Shrew and of the Taming of *a* Shrew are essentially the same. It would weary the patience of the reader to enter into a minute contrast of their several parts, and were we to proceed to the notice of verbal coincidences, it would become necessary to transcribe at least half of each of the comedies. Every thing particularly worthy of notice is comprised in the two principal characters ; to them, therefore, will the following observations be mostly confined.

The story of the old play is that of the father of three daughters, whose determination it was to have the eldest married before either of her sisters. But the lady's temper was so notoriously bad, that suitors were deterred from approach,

and the lovers of the younger sisters, as a refuge from absolute despair, resorted to the expedient of procuring a husband for Kate. By a rough and singular method of courtship the shrew was won, and by a perseverance in the same violence, tamed. The scene of these transactions is Athens : Shakspeare has transferred it to Padua. He has given his heroine only one sister, Biancha, but bestows no less than three lovers upon her. The interest of the play centers in the contest between Kate and her adventurous assailant ; and he is a man actuated by the hope of wealth, and represented

“ As blunt in speech as she is sharp in tongue.” (*Old Play.*)

“ — As peremptory as she proud minded.”

(*Shakspeare.*)

On the day appointed for the wedding, the bridegroom appears so rudely and fantastically attired, as to shock the taste of the company.

“ Fie Ferando, not thus attired, for shame,
Come to my chamber and there suite thyself
Of twenty suits that I did never weare.” (*Old Play.*)

“ See not your bride in these unreverent robes ;
Go to my chamber, put on clothes of mine.”

(*Shakspeare.*)

The old play assigns a motive for this singular conduct, while Shakspeare trusts the matter

to the general circumstances of Petruchio's character.

“ For when my wife and I are married once,
She's such a shrew, if we should once fall out,
Sheele pull my costly sutes over mine eares,
And therefore am I thus attir'd a while.” (*Old Play.*)

The marriage ceremony concluded, the bridegroom takes leave of his friends, and in spite of all their intreaties, in defiance of the wishes, anger, and solicitations of the bride, refuses to partake of the wedding dinner, and carries her directly to his own house. And here her painful discipline commences. He beats the servants without a cause, finds fault with the meat, which, although it is excellent, he casts about the room. In fine, the bride goes supperless to bed, and the next day, overpowered with hunger, the haughty Katharine is reduced to solicit her husband's servant for a supply of viands. All the bantering between Katharine and Grumio, in Shakspeare, is copied from the scene between Katharine and Sander in the old play, though varied in its form: in both cases it ends by Katharine beating the domestic, the entrance of her husband with some meat for her, and his sending it away again without permitting her to taste it.

This scene of mortification is succeeded by a still severer trial of female patience, — the inter-

ference of the lady's husband in her choice of articles of dress. Shakspeare has here copied almost every idea from the original play, in which are found the objections to the *cap*, the *gown*, the *compassed cape*, the *trunk sleeves*, the balderdash about *taking up the gown*, and the quarrel between the servant and the tailor.

Shakspeare also copied the scene in which Petruchio makes Katharine call the sun the moon, from the old play; as likewise that, wherein he compels her to address an old gentleman as a "young budding virgin, fair and fresh, and sweet."* In this instance it is remarkable, that though the leading idea is adopted, not a single expression of the original is preserved, but the similies and language are altered throughout.

The following quotation from the old play, will show how splendid was the array of imagery that Shakspeare had before him.

[*Ferando speaks to the old man.*]

“ Faire lovely maid, young and affable,
More clear of hew and far more beautiful
Than precious sardonix or purple rocks
Of amethysts or glistering hiasinth,
More amiable far than is the plain,
Where glistering Cepherus in silver bowers

* Act IV. sc. 5.

Gaseth upon the giant Andromede,
Sweet Kate entertain this lovely woman.

Duke. I think the man is mad, he calls me a woman.

Kate. Fair lovely lady, bright and christaline,
Stately and beauteous as the eye-train'd bird,
As glorious as the morning wash't with dew,
Within whose eyes she takes her dawning beams,
And golden summer sleeps upon thy cheeks,
Wrapt up thy radiations in some cloud,
Lest that thy beauty make this stately town
Inhabitable like the burning zone,
With sweet reflections of thy lovely face."

In both incidents, Shakspeare is not satisfied with a single surrender of Kate's understanding to her husband's will. Petruchio pursues the joke one step further than the old play; he makes Katharine deny that the sun is the moon, after having compelled her to affirm that it was; and apologise to the old gentleman for having addressed him as a woman, though she had done so by Petruchio's command.

The last trial of Katharine's obedience is, like the former ones, derived from the old Taming of a Shrew; and Petruchio triumphs over those, who, placing implicit reliance on the meek and loving dispositions of their partners, had not thought any discipline requisite for duly impressing on them the necessity of submission. Shakspeare exemplifies the complete reformation of Kate, by assigning to her an eloquent lecture

on the duty due to a husband from a wife.* He borrowed the circumstance, and the last line or two, from the old play; and there his obligations ended, as will be readily believed after the perusal of the following lines:

“ Then to His (God’s) image he did make a man,
Old Adam, and from his side asleep
A rib was taken, of which the Lord did make
The woe of man, so term’d by Adam then,
Woman, for that by her came sin to us,
And for her sin was Adam doom’d to die.
As Sarah to her husband, so should we
Obey them, love them, keep and nourish them,
If they by any means do want our helps.
Laying our hands under their feet to tread,
If that by that we might procure their ease.
And for a president I’ll first begin,
And lay my hand under my husband’s feet.”

The underplot of Shakspeare’s play consists of the adventures of a young man who falls in love, and determines to devote his attention entirely to the interests of his passion. He divests himself of his cloaths, his name, his credit, and confers them on his servant. Affairs take such a turn, that the presence of his father becomes necessary; but as the old gentleman’s approbation of his proceedings was not very probable, the hopeful youth hits upon the device of engaging

* Act V. sc. 2.

a person to represent his parent. At this critical juncture, the real father unexpectedly arrives, and encounters his son's servant, dressed in his master's robes: the servant impudently disclaims all knowledge of his master's father. These incidents are all found in the *Taming of a Shrew*; but it is curious that Shakspeare did not adopt them from that source, but from an old comedy called the "Supposes," translated from Ariosto by George Gascoigne, and published in 1566. The *Supposes* represents the young gentleman who changed cloaths with his servant, as having left his home for the purposes of study. Shakspeare does the same: in the old *Taming of a Shrew*, the motive is totally different.

"Thankes noble Polidor, my second selfe,
The faithful love which I have found in thee
Hath made me leave my father's princelie court
To come to Athens thus to find thee out."

In Gascoigne's play, as in Shakspeare's, the metamorphosed servant is, as a matter of policy, converted also into a suitor of his master's mistress. In the *Taming of a Shrew*, the servant goes not as a lover, but merely to teach music to Kate. The office of music-master Shakspeare confers upon Hortensio, a real lover of Bianca, who gets his head broke with a lute; a joke car-

ried somewhat beyond the original, where Kate only *threatens* a similar violence.

In the Taming of *a* Shrew, it does not appear how the pretended father was induced to assume his feigned character; but in the Supposes, and in Shakspeare's play, the same circumstances lead to it. In both these plays, also, the real and the pretended father meet, and the former is outfaced by the impudent confidence of the impostor: in both plays, the servant denies all knowledge of his master's father; and the old gentleman concludes, seeing his servant superbly dressed, that his son had been murdered for the sake of his wealth. In the Supposes, Shakspeare found the name of Petruchio. More than any of Shakspeare's plays, the Taming of the Shrew has the appearance of being a mere alteration of a previous performance, with few pretensions to the character of a new and independent composition. In the progress of his revision, the dramatist consulted the Supposes as the source whence some part of the play before him had been derived, and partly restored the omissions of his predecessor. The disparity of merit between the old and the subsequent performance, forcibly arrests the attention, for the value of their materials is intrinsically the same; but in one case, they are wrought with ordinary

skill; in the other, moulded into life and mind by the hand of a master. The pointed direction of the shaft of wit, the judicious introduction of skilful observation, and the powerful marking of character, are the points in which our author's superiority is displayed. The character of Katharine he left pretty nearly as he found it, but the Shrew-tamer is infinitely improved. Roughness, sternness, and inflexibility, were necessary to the performance of his herculean task, and all these qualities are natural in Fernando. But by Petruchio they are only assumed; his native character is highly humourous, and ever amidst his most outrageous fits of anger, some ludicrous image, or brilliant flash of imagination or wit, belies the assumed severity of his threatenings. His reflections on the vanity of dress are philosophically just and poetically beautiful*, and entirely the property of Shakespeare, after the deduction is made from them of the merit due to the following passage in the old play.

“Come Kate, we now will go see thy father's house
Even in these honest mean habiliments.
Our purses shall be rich, our garments plain,
To shroud our bodies from the winter rage,
And that's enough, what should we care for more?”

* Act IV. sc. 3.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

1596.

THE story of Romeo and Juliet originated with the Neapolitan Massuccio, who flourished about 1470. From his thirty-third novel it was copied by Luigi da Porto, a gentleman of Vicenza, who published it under the title of *La Guilietta*, in 1535. Bandello has a novel on the subject, and the tale is clad in the garb of truth by its insertion in the *History of Venice*, by Girolamo de la Corte. The tale of the lovers, varied from its Italian origin, appeared in a French novel, by Pierre Boisteanu; and in 1562 it found its way from the French, with considerable alterations and large additions, into an English poem of four thousand tedious lines, by Mr. Arthur Brooke, under the title of “*THE TRAGICALL HYSTORY OF ROMEUS AND JULIET, containing a rare Example of true Constancie: with the sub-till Counsels and Practises of an old Fryer, and*

their ill event.” Another translation from the French of Boisteau was made in prose by William Painter, and published in his “Palace of Pleasure” in 1567, as *Rhomeo and Julietta*. It appears also that a play on the subject was exhibited on the stage even before the publication of Brooke’s poem.*

Brooke’s poem was the basis of Shakspeare’s tragedy. After the versifier, the dramatist designates the Prince of Verona, *Escalus*; the family of Romeo, *Montague*; the messenger employed by Friar Lawrence to carry his letter to Mantua, *John*; and he gives the name of *Freetown*, which Brooke calls the residence of the Montagues, to the “common judgement-place” of the prince. Painter calls the prince *Signor Escala*, and *Lord Bartholomew of Escala*; Romeo’s family, *Montesches*; their abode, *Villa Franca*; and the friar’s messenger, *Anselme*. The incident of Capulet writing the names of the guests whom he invites to supper, exists in the poem and the play, but is not noticed by Painter, nor is it found in the original Italian novel. Neither is there any mention in the Palace of Pleasure of the Italian custom alluded to in the play and poem, of

* Address “To the Reader,” prefixed to Brooke’s poem.

conveying the dead to the grave “in their best robes, uncover’d on the bier.”

The preference given by Shakspeare to the verses of Brooke did not, however, preclude him from occasionally availing himself of Painter’s translation. The poem represents Tybalt, the cousin of Juliet, as a choleric and overbearing man ; whilst the prose translation speaks of him as one “of good experience in arms,” and describes the inhabitants of Verona lamenting his death ; “so well for his dexterity in arms as for the hope of his great good service in time to come,” which explains Mercutio’s allusion to Tybalt as “the very butcher of a silk button, a duellist, a duellist,” &c. &c.

The poem assigns no particular period for the operation of the opiate on Juliet ; but in the Palace of Pleasure the friar tells her she shall remain in a state of insensibility “the space of *forty hours* at the least :” the dramatic friar intimates to Juliet that in her

“ ——— borrow’d likeness of shrunk death
Thou shalt remain full *two and forty hours*.”

The payment made by Romeo to the apothecary is said by Shakspeare to be *forty ducats* : Painter says *fifty ducats*, and Brooke’s poem *forty crowns* !

I come now to a particular comparison between the poem and the play. Brooke's narrative is as follows :

Among the noble families at Verona were those of Capulet and Montague. They were rivals and enemies ; blood was frequently shed at the shrine of their animosity, and both the friendly mediation, and the authority of their prince, were in vain exerted to suppress their disgraceful feuds.

Romeo, the son of Montague, was remarkable for his personal accomplishments. Juliet, the daughter of Capulet, was unrivalled in charms amidst the grace and beauty of Verona. Romeo was deeply enamoured of a maid whose ungrateful coldness at length determined him to drive her from his mind, by devoting himself to the service of another. He plunged into all the gaiety of Verona, and accidentally meeting Juliet at a masquerade, they conceived a mutual attachment : love furnished the means of communication, and a secret marriage appeared to realize their romantic anticipations of felicity.

But bliss is transient. In a tumultuous encounter of the Montagues and Capulets, Tybalt, the cousin of Juliet, was slain by Romeo ; and Romeo, as a punishment for his crime, was banished. The unsuspecting relatives of Juliet naturally

attributed her consequent affliction to the death of Tybalt; and, in the hope of diverting her melancholy, they resolved to marry her to the noble Count Paris. Juliet's trepidation was excessive; but her father, inexorable to every intreaty, peremptorily fixed the day for her espousals. In an agony of despair, she flew for assistance to the friar who had married her. She received with delight a medicine from his hands which gradually suspended the powers of animation, and clad her beautiful form in death's repulsive garb. On the day appointed for her nuptials they bore her body to the grave, and placed her, as was the custom of the country, in the cemetery of her ancestors upon an open bier.

In the mean time friar Lawrence had despatched a messenger to Romeo with the sad and interesting intelligence, and arranged his secret return to Verona before the period when Juliet would awake. But the destiny of the lovers was misfortune. Seeking for a companion in his journey, the messenger of the friar entered a house infected with the plague, whence he was not suffered to depart. The delay afforded opportunity for the arrival of the news of Juliet's death at Mantua, before the explanatory letter of the friar. Wretched and im-

patient, the distracted husband hastened to Verona. In the obscurity of night he forced an entrance to the monument of Capulet, clasped his clay-cold mistress in his arms, took poison and expired.

Calculating the duration of Juliet's insensibility, the friar repaired to the vault to release her from her frightful and perilous entombment. The corpse of Romeo lay stretched before him, and the wretched Juliet revived to a sense of all her hopeless woe: impenetrable to consolation, and deaf to every entreaty to flight, after a thousand times kissing the body of her husband, she closed her hapless life by plunging Romeo's dagger into her heart.

The management of this story by the dramatist first claims attention; and subsequently his use of the characters of the poem.

In deference to the metrical authority Shakespeare's hero first appears devoted to the charms of a relentless beauty, whose indifference at length disposes her admirer to listen to the sage suggestions of a friend, no longer to consume his youth in the pursuit of insensibility, but give the rein to imagination, and seek amidst the youthful loveliness of Verona the favour of a less frigid fair.

Accompanied by his friend, both in the poem

and the play, Romeo enters the mansion of Capulet at the celebration of a splendid entertainment, and there, for the first time, beholds the lovely daughter of his enemy. He possesses himself of a seat next that which would be occupied by Juliet at the conclusion of the dance, and he then takes her hand.

Juliet's affectedly careless enquiries after the names of the guests as they depart from the masquerade, till she comes to Romeo, are copied from the poem; as is also the recognition of Romeo by the Capulets, who

“ ————— disdayne the presence of theyr foe,

Yet they suppress theyr styrred yre :

* * * * *

They use no taunting talke, ne harme him by theyre
deede,

They neyther say, what makst thou here, ne yet they say,
God speede.”

The poem represents the love-sick Romeus as nightly resorting to the garden of Capulet, to enjoy the delight of gazing on the chamber of his mistress: many evenings elapsed before the anxious Juliet was made happy by the sight of her lover. In the play, Romeo leaps the wall of Capulet's garden immediately after the conclusion of the masquerade. In the enchanting scene that follows, the influence of the poem is distinctly to be traced :

“ See how she leans her cheek upon her hand,”
 was suggested by Brooke’s description of Juliet,
 “ In windowe on her leaning arme her weary hed doth rest;”
 So also Juliet’s expostulation ;

“ O Romeus of your lyfe too lavas sure you are,
 That in this place and at this time, to hasard it you dare.
 What if your dedly foes, my kinsmen, saw you here ?”

which is thus expressed by Shakspeare,

“ The orchard walls are high, and hard to climb ;
 And the place death, considering who thou art,
 If any of my kinsmen find thee here.”

After the interview in the garden, both Romeus and Juliet resort to the cell of friar Lawrence, who, in the poem and the play, consents to the marriage of the impatient lovers, hoping it may prove the means of reconciling family animosities.

Shakspeare greatly accelerated the progress of the occurrences which followed the marriage of Romeo and Juliet. Instead of suffering them to revel for three months, as in the poem, in the bliss of their union, he renews the bloody encounters of the rival houses on the very day of the marriage, and on that day Tybalt receives his death from the hand of Romeo. Shakspeare has taken some pains to justify this action.

It not appearing enough to him, that Tybalt, as in the novel, should be the unprovoked aggressor, or that Romeo's self-command should only be overcome by repeated insult, he adds the aggravation of Mercutio's murder. Shakspeare's Romeo is indifferent to Tybalt's brutality to himself; but the brave "Mercutio slain" "in his behalf;" the insolent victor before him, "Alive! in triumph!"—forbearance became not only impossible, but criminal.

Romeo's flight to the cell of the friar; his ungovernable distraction at his sovereign's sentence of banishment, his unchecked flood of grief, and his insensibility to every attempt at consolation, are circumstances common both to the poem and the play; as is also the restoration of Romeo's mind to calmness by the prospect of an interview with his bride ere he bent his steps to exile.

Shakspeare has made the parting scene of the lovers very short, omitting the first part of the interview, and commencing so late as the dawning of the melancholy day destined for their eternal separation. The train of thought which suggested the beautiful opening of this interview is to be traced in the following lines:

“The fresh Aurora with her pale and silver glade
Did clear the skies, and from the earth had chased ougly
shade.

When thou ne lookest wide, ne closely dost thou winke,
When Phœbus from our hamysphere in westerne wave doth
sinke,

What cooler then the heavens do shew unto thine eyes,
The same, (or like,) saw Romeus in farthest esterne skyes.
As yet he sawe no day, ne could he call it night,
With equal force decreasing darke fought with increasing
light.”

The succeeding lines are the pure inspirations
of Shakspeare’s genius :

“ —— look love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east :
Night’s candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.”

Throughout the remaining scenes of the play, Shakspeare’s adherence to the incidents of the poem is so close as to leave no important exception for notice till we arrive at the introduction of Paris at the end, for no other apparent purpose than that of giving Romeo an opportunity to slay him ; an arrangement certainly unnecessary, and detrimental to the general effect. The page of Paris, alarmed by his master’s rencontre with Romeo, runs to summon the watch, who are by this means brought to the spot instead of being attracted, in passing; by

the unusual circumstance of a light burning in a tomb.

The concluding circumstances of the Italian novel, (except perhaps the mode of Juliet's death) are infinitely more affecting, and better calculated for dramatic effect, than those of Shakspeare, who was misled in this important particular by the English versions of the story. Luigi da Porto relates, that having taken the poison, Romeo, anticipating the approach of death, clasped the body of his mistress in his arms. His warm embrace assisted to dispel the effects of the almost exhausted medicine. Juliet awoke, and, recognizing her Romeo, pressed him to her breast and covered him with kisses. But the subtle poison had now begun to manifest its power, and scarcely affording him time to explain his fatal error, Romeo sunk senseless on the earth. Distracted by grief, the unfortunate Juliet tore her lovely locks and beat her innocent and spotless breast, by turns pouring over him a flood of tears, and imprinting a thousand kisses on his cheek.

The friar, on his arrival, stood motionless with horror at the scene before him. The bosom of Juliet supported the head of her expiring lover, whose latest breath her sweet lips strove to catch. The friar called on Romeo to look

up and once more bless his mistress with his voice. At the beloved name of Juliet the dying lover raised his languid eyes, but the heavy hand of death was on him; convulsions shook his frame, and one short sigh released him from his woe.

No entreaty could prevail with Juliet to quit the body of her husband, or shake her resolution to follow him to death. She earnestly intreated the friar never to make known what had passed, so that their bodies might remain united in one sepulchre; and if by any accident the manner of their death should be discovered, she adjured him to implore their miserable parents to suffer those whom one flame of love had consumed, to remain together in one tomb. Then turning to the body of her lover, she closed his eyes, and bathed his cold visage with her tears:—“Lord of my heart,” she exclaimed, “without you what have I to do with life? what can I do but follow you to death? Nothing! not even death itself shall part us!” Reflecting with horror on her fate, she violently suppressed her respiration, and at length uttering a piercing shriek, fell dead upon her husband’s corpse.

With the action Shakspeare did not think fit to close the dialogue of his tragedy, but he prolongs his scene by assigning to the friar an un-

interesting narration of events already exhibited. Into such singular errors is our author frequently betrayed by his implicit adoption of the arrangements of the materials which he used in the construction of his plots. The friar of the poem recapitulates the whole of the sad story of the lovers, and Shakspeare followed without any question of its propriety.

Over the grave of their children Shakspeare reconciles the Montagues and Capulets, who determine on erecting statues of pure gold to the memory of their ill-fated offspring. The dramatis personæ are then dismissed with the intimation that

“Some shall be pardon'd, and some punish'd.”

The poem concludes with the retirement of the friar for the remainder of his days to the solitude of a hermitage; the banishment of the nurse for her guilty concealment of the marriage of her mistress; and the execution of the poverty-struck apothecary for selling Romeo poison. The faithful lovers are interred in a splendid marble monument inscribed with epitaphs commemorative of their untimely fate.

The characters of the principal personages in this fascinating play are copied from the poem, with the same fidelity as the plot. The hero's

feelings are susceptible and ardent; his mind knows no cold medium in its impressions; despondency, joy, and despair, assert their dominion by turns. An unrequited passion absorbs him in melancholy, and dissolves him into tears; successful love elates him beyond the bounds of reason; and the pressure of misfortune plunges him into the vortex of despair. The first impulse of his feelings is the sole director of his conduct. The love both of Romeus and Romeo for Rosaline has every appearance of assured sincerity; Rosaline is their goddess. Yet the beauty of Juliet at once effaces this arbitress of their destinies from their remembrance; and every faculty of heart and understanding is absorbed in the delirium of a new and sudden passion. They see no difficulty, and are heedless of every obstacle: regardless of life, they pursue Juliet through every danger, and never rest till their fate is indissolubly connected with the daughter of their mortal enemy.

The scene between Romeo and the friar in the cell, exemplifies the use made by Shakspeare of the poem. Romeo is thus described as receiving his sentence of banishment:

“ These heavy tydings heard, his golden lockes he tare,
And like a frantike man hath torne the garmentes that he
ware.

And as the smitten deere in brakes is waltring found,
So waltreth he, and with his breast doth beate the troden
 grounde.

He riseth eft, and strikes his hed against the wals,
He falleth downe againe, and lowde for hasty death he
 cals.

Come spedy deth, (quoth he), the readiest leache in
 love,

Since nought can els beneath the sunne the ground of grefe
 remove,

Of lothsome life breake downe the hated staggeringstaves,
Destroy, destroy at once the lyfe that faintly yet decays."

In Shakspeare it appears thus :

Friar. " Let me dispute with thee of thy estate.

Rom. Thou canst not speak of what thou dost not feel :

Wert thou as young as I, Juliet thy love,

An hour but married, Tybalt murdered,

Doting like me, and like me banished,

Then might'st thou speak, then might'st thou tear
 thy hair,

And fall upon the ground, as I do now,

Taking the measure of an unmade grave."

The reproaches also of the friar, and his efforts to administer consolation are closely imitated.

" Art thou, quoth he, a man? Thy shape saith, so thou art ;
Thy crying, and thy weping eyes denote a woman's hart.
For manly reason is quite from of thy mynd out-chased,
And in her stead affections lewd and fancies highly
 placed :

So that I stode in doute, this houre (at the least,)

If thou a man or woman wert, or else a brutish beast."

Thus in Shakspeare :

“ Hold thy desperate hand :
 Art thou a man ? thy form cries out thou art ;
 Thy tears are womanish ; thy wild acts denote
 The unreasonable fury of a beast.”

* * *
 “ Why rail’st thou on thy birth, the heaven and earth ?”

The last line quoted from the play, exhibits one of those instances of forgetfulness and indifference to minutiae, so frequently to be detected in Shakspeare’s works. In reading the previous part of the scene, it will not be found that Romeo had vented any imprecations either on his “ birth,” the “ heavens,” or the “ earth ;” but so it was found in the original ; and in composing the admonition of his holy father, Shakspeare adopted the suggestions of his recollection, without investigating the propriety of their application to his own scene. *

* In this very play are found two other instances of forgetfulness. In Benvolio’s account to the prince of Romeo’s conduct in his encounter with Tybalt, he relates, that Romeo

—— “ Bade him bethink
 How nice the quarrel was, and urg’d withal
 Your high displeasure,”

arguments which we search for in vain in Romeo’s address to Tybalt. — When Capulet had fixed the day of Juliet’s nuptials he expressed his determination to

“ Fyrst nature did he blame, the author of his lyfe,
 In which his joyes had been so scant, and sorrowes aye
 so ryfe;
 The time and place of byrth he fiersly did reprove,
 He cryed out (with open mouth) against the stares
 above:”

The poem made no inconsiderable contributions towards the formation of Shakspeare's Juliet, that lovely picture of innocence, truth, and constancy. It luxuriantly describes her

—— “ Right fayre, of perfect shape,
 Which Theseus or Paris would have chosen to their rape;”

and much more interestingly,

—— “ Beside her shape and native bewties hewe,
 With which like as she grew in age, her vertues prayses
 grew,

—— “ Keep no great ado; — a friend, or two:
 For hark you, Tybalt being slain so late,
 It may be thought we held him carelessly.
 Therefore we'll have some half a dozen friends,
 And there an end.”

As Ritson observes, Capulet's mind became strangely altered, or Shakspeare was strangely forgetful; for the old gentleman is afterwards found overwhelmed with the cares of preparation, delivering a written list to his servant of guests to be invited, and directing the hire of “ twenty cunning cooks.”

She was also so wise, so lowly, and so mylde,
That even from the hory head unto the witless childe,
She won the hearts of all."

The love of Juliet, though sudden and violent, is virtuous. Her vows are only pledged to Romeo on the conviction of his equal sincerity, and that his object was such, as virtue could encourage without a blush.

" If your thought be chaste and have on vertue ground,
If wedlocke be the ende and marke which your desire
 hath found,
Obedience set aside, unto my parentes dewe,
The quarell eke that long agoone betwene our housholdes
 grewe,
Both me and mine I will all whole to you betake,
And following your whereso you goe, my father's house
 forsake.
But if by wanton love and by unlawful sute
You thinke in ripest yeres to plucke my maydenhoods
 dainty frute,
You are begylde ; and now your Juliet you beseekes
To cease your sute, and suffer her to live among her
 likes."

Juliet's impatience for the hour which was to bless her with her husband's presence, owes its origin also to the poem ; where it is expressed by a wish similar to that in the play, that the approach of night might be hastened by an accelerated motion of the sun.

The fatal encounter of Romeo with her cousin is the event which precipitates Juliet from the summit of ideal happiness into the abyss of misery, and her mental agitation is strikingly similar in the poem and the play. In its first impulse her feeling is directed against Romeo, whom she accuses of unkindness, cruelty, and deceit; but the powerful passion of love quickly reassuming its ascendancy in her bosom, she upbraids herself for her anger and ungenerous suspicions.

Transcendently engaging as Juliet appears in the fond interchange of love with Romeo, her character is exalted into heroism, when, amidst overwhelming distress, she displays courage and constancy which no considerations of personal danger can subdue, or even shake. Her firm resolve to meet death rather than suffer the pollution of a second marriage, and her steady expression of that determination to her mother, are derived from the poem, as are also Juliet's flight, in the extremity of her misfortunes, to the friar for assistance and advice; her joyful acceptance of the horrible alternative offered her, and her feigned repentant submission to the wishes of her parents after her return from shrift.

The skill of Shakspeare in the adaptation of the materials of others to his own purpose is nowhere displayed to more advantage than in the

impressive soliloquy of Juliet on the point of swallowing the potion, on the due effect of which her fate seemed then suspended.* What follows is from Brooke's poem.

“ What do I know (quoth she), if that this powder shall
Sooner or later than it should or els not work at all?
And then my craft describe as open as the day,
The people's tale and laughing stocke shall I remayne for
aye.

And what know I (quoth she), if serpents odious,
And other beasts and worms that are of nature venomous,
That wonted are to lurke in darke caves under grounde,
And commonly, as I have heard, in dead mens tombes are
found,

Shall harm me, yea or nay, where I shall lye as ded?
Or how shall I that alway have in so fresh ayre been bred,
Endure the lothsome stinke of such an heaped store
Of carkases, not yet consumde, and bones that long before
Intombed were, where I my sleeping place shall have,
Where all my auncestors doe rest, my kindreds common
grave?

Shall not the fryer and my Romeus, when they come,
Fynde me (if I awake before), y- stifled in the tombe?”

To the following passage must be ascribed the beautiful and striking exemplification of the power of fear over the imagination, which in Juliet is exhibited with such infinite force :

“ And whilst she in these thoughtes doth dwell somewhat
too long,

* “ What if this mixture do not work at all,” &c.

The force of her ymagining anon doth waxe so strong,
 That she surmysde she saw, out of the hollow vaulte
 (A griesly thing to looke upon,) the karkas of Tybalt;
 Right in the selfe same sort that she few days before
 Had seene him in his blood embrewde, to death eke wounded
 sore."

Shakspeare assigns to Juliet at the opening of her soliloquy a short description of her personal feelings :

" I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins
 That almost freezes up the heat of life :"

Which is a refined version of these lines of Brooke :

" Her dainty tender partes gan shever all for dred,
 Her golden heares did stande upright upon her chillish hed.
 Then pressed with the feare that she there lived in,
 A sweate as colde as mountain yse pearst through her slender
 skin."

It remains to notice one arbitrary deviation of Shakspeare from his authorities. The poem particularly describes Juliet as " scarce yet full *sixteen* years, — too young to be a bryde." Shakspeare is not less specific. — " She hath not seen the change of *fourteen* years." Bandello and the Palace of Pleasure both speak of Juliet as *eighteen* years of age.

The friar Lawrence of the poem, and the friar Lawrence of the play, are identically the same ; meekness, piety, and virtue are exemplified in

both. But it was necessary to make it credible that the friar should be in possession of a medicine capable of producing an appearance perfectly resembling death. He is therefore represented in the poem, not like the generality of his brethren,

——— “ a grosse unlearned foole,
But doctor of divinitie proceded he in schoole.
The secretes eke he knew in Nature’s workes that loorke ;
By magiks arte most men suppos’d that he could wonders
woorke ;”

And in speaking of himself, he says,

“ What force the stones, the plants and metals have to
woorke,
And divers other things that in the bowels of the earth do
loorke,
With care I have sought out, with payne I did them prove ;
With them eke can I help myself at times of my behove.”

The praise, therefore, bestowed on the bard for the appropriate discourse of his friar on the wonderful properties of the vegetable world*, is not, in the fullest extent, his due ; since he copied the idea of making Laurence highly learned in the medicinal virtues of plants from the old poem of Brooke. Shakspeare’s merit is his use of so judicious a preparation for the singular circumstance that follows.

* Schlegel’s Lectures on Dram. Lit. Vol. ii. p. 188.

Nothing is known of Shakspeare's friar beyond what is to be gleaned from his progress in the drama; but an amusing piece of his prototype's private history slips out in the narrative of the poem. When Romeus flies to him for protection, the friar is not without the means of affording him an effectual concealment, for

“ A secret place he hath, well seeled round about,
The mouth of which so close is shut, that none may finde
it out;

But roome there is to walke, and place to sitte and rest,
Beside a bed to sleep upon, full soft and trimly drest.
The floure is planked so, with mattes; it is so warme,
That neither wind nor smoky dampes have powre him ought
to harme.

Where he was wont in youth his fayre frends to bestowe,
There now he hydeth Romeus: —”

The character of the nurse is drawn with peculiar fidelity; she is impertinently loquacious, disgustingly obsequious, and basely regardless of principle when assailed by the temptation of a bribe, or tickled by the speculative charms of an intrigue.

The poem characteristically marks the old lady's indifference to honesty, in her conduct to Juliet: —

“ Not easily she made the froward nurse to bowe,
But wonne at length *with promest-hyre* she made a solemne
vowe

To do what she commands, as handmayde of her hest ;
Her mistress secrets hide she will, within her covert brest."

To this assailable point of her character Romeo was equally alive.

" Then he six crownes of gold out of his pocket drew,
And gave them her ; — a slight reward (quod he) and so
adiew.

In seven yeres twise tolde she had not bowd so lowe
Her crooked knees, as now they bowe : she swears she will
bestowe

Her crafty wit, her time, and all her busy payne,
To helpe him to his hoped blisse ; and, cowering downe
agayne,
She takes her leave : ——"

Shakspeare has not failed to introduce these characteristic traits : Romeo bestows on the nurse a present " for her pains," which proves productive of all the happy effects ascribed to the present in the original,*

" The best y shapde is he and hath the fayrest face,
Of all this towne, and there is none hath halfe so good a grace :
So gentle of his speeche, and of his counsell wise : —
And still with many prayses more she heave him to the
skies."

Thus Shakspeare : " though his face be better than any man's, yet his leg excels all men's ; and for a hand, and a foot, and a body, — though

* In Painter's Palace of Pleasure, there is no mention of any present made by Romeo to the nurse.

they be not to be talked on, yet they are past compare : he is not the flower of courtesy, — but I'll warrant him, as gentle as a lamb."*

A more detestable feature in this time-serving creature's character is displayed in her conduct when Juliet is urged to an union with Paris :

“ And County Paris now she praiseth ten times more,
By wrong, than she herself by right had Romeus praysde
before.

Paris shall dwell there still, Romeus shall not returne ;
What shall it boote her all her life to languish still and mourne.
The pleasures past before she must account as gayne ;
But if he do retorne — what then ? — for one she shall have
twayne.”

The dramatist has not pressed the grossness of his original into his service, but in other respects he has not paid less deference to the authority of Brooke. † Two features yet remain to be noticed, without which any representation of a nurse would have been defective, — an uncontrollable propensity to babble, and indecency. The poem is rich in instances of both ; and no one will suspect Shakspeare of reluctance to follow so worthy an example. The dialogue of his nurse is in perfect harmony with the poem, in

* Act II. sc. 5.

† ——— 'Faith, here 'tis : Romeo
Is banished,' &c. &c. Act III. sc. 5.

some points highly imitative as to manner, though the matter of her discourse is mostly original.

No personage in the play is so distinguished for perfect distinctness and individuality as Mercutio, and Mercutio is the indisputable property of the dramatist. The name, indeed, is met with in the poem, and the description of him as

“ A courtier that eche where was highly had in price,
For he was courteous of his speech and pleasant of device.
Even as a lion would among the lambs be bold,
Such was among the bashful maids Mercutio to behold,”

may be allowed to have furnished a leading idea for the delineation of his character. But Mercutio, the gallant and the gay, is to be met with no where but in the scenes of Shakspeare ; Mercutio, whose imagination is as fertile as his wit is brilliant, whose vivacity never flags, whose “ martial scorn” ne’er stoops to an acknowledgement of danger, nor knows one thought of fear ; Mercutio, who draws his sword for combat with the same gaiety as he equips himself for a masquerade, and, receiving a mortal thrust, jests on his wound, and dies with a banter on his lips.

No writer was ever more sensible of the advantage of contrast than Shakspeare. It is an

expedient to which he continually resorts, and from which his ability in the delineation of character enabled him to reap the highest advantage. Mercutio is skilfully interwoven with the business of the play, and made essential to its progress. His presence is the harbinger of cheerfulness and bustle : his brilliant and easy wit forms a delightful refuge from the amorous sighs of Romeo and Juliet in the early scenes, and contributes, by the effect of contrast, to deepen the solemnity of the afflicting incidents that succeed his death ; a death in itself melancholy, for no one ever parted from Mercutio without a sigh.

Shakspeare's ill-timed, but still delightful, description of the unhappy apothecary, has exalted him into more notice than his business in the play confers on him.

The germ of almost every idea is to be met with in the poem.

“ And then fro street to street he wandreth up and down,
To see if he in any place may find, in all the town,
A salve meet for his sore, an oil fit for his wound ;
And seeking long, (a lack too soon !) the thing he sought he
found.

An apothecary sat unbusied at his door,
Who by his heavy countenance he guessed to be poor.
And in his shop he saw his boxes were but few,
And in his window (of his wares) there was so small a shew ;

Wherefore our Romeus assuredly hath thought,
 What by no friendship could be got, with money could be
 bought ;

For needy lack is like the poor man to compel,
 To sell that which the city's law forbideth him to sell.
 Then by the hand he drew the needy man apart,
 And with the sight of glittering gold enflamed hath his
 heart :

Take fifty crowns of gold (quoth he) I give them thee,
 So that before I part from hence, thou straight deliver me
 Some poison strong, that may in less than half an hour,
 Kill him whose wretched hap shall be the potion to devour.
 The wretch by covetise is won, and doth assent
 To sell the thing, whose sale, ere long, too late, he doth
 repent.

In haste he poison sought, and closely he it bound,
 And then began with whisp'ring voice thus in his eare to
 round :

‘ Fair sir, (quoth he) be sure this is the speeding gear,
 And more there is than you shall need ; for half of that is
 there

Will serve, I undertake, in less than half an hour
 To kill the strongest man alive, such is the poison's power. ”

Such are the selections made by Shakspeare from the materials before him, and such is his beautiful adaptation of them. By judiciously blending, correcting, and omitting, he has produced an harmonious and graceful whole out of a poem that abounded in those absurd and risible exuberances, common to the compositions of Brooke's contemporaries. The muse of the dramatist has conferred a charm of delicacy and pathos on the loves of Romeo and Juliet, to which they could

make no pretensions previous to their becoming the subjects of his pen. That this is entirely attributable to the elegance of his composition is evident, for the alterations and additions made by Shakspeare to the story of the poem are few, and, with the exception of Mercutio, by no means violent or important.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

1597.*

THE plot of the Merchant of Venice comprises the main incident of the bond, the auxiliary circumstance of the caskets, and the episode of the loves of Lorenzo and Jessica; all unconnected by any natural association, and deducible from entirely separate sources.

The story of the bond bears every stamp of oriental origin, and is still extant in the Persian language. So early as the fourteenth century it made its appearance in Europe in a work called *Il Pecorone*, by Ser Giovanni, a Florentine novelist; and before the close of the sixteenth century it had found its way into various collections of romantic tales. The dra-

* Note C.

matist, however, derived his materials, though probably indirectly, from the Pecorone, of which the story is as follows :

Giannetto, adopted by his godfather, Ansaldo, obtains permission to go to Alexandria ; but changes his destination in the hope of obtaining in marriage a lady of great wealth and beauty at Belmont, whose hand would be bestowed on the adventurer who could obtain a premature enjoyment of the connubial rites : his enterprise fails, for his senses are absorbed at night in sleep by a narcotic given to him in his wine ; and, agreeably to stipulation, his vessel and merchandise are forfeited. Giannetto returns to Venice, and fits out another vessel which he loses in a second attempt upon the lady. His generous benefactor equips him a third time, and, that his godson might be furnished with the greatest splendour, Ansaldo borrows ten thousand ducats of a Jew on the condition that, if they are not repaid on an appointed day, the Jew may take a pound of flesh from any part of the body of his debtor. Giannetto's expedition proves fortunate ; he had learnt the cause of his failure, provided against its recurrence, and he now obtains the lady in marriage. But, lost in a delirium of pleasure with his bride, Giannetto forgets Ansaldo's bond till the very day that it becomes due. He hastens to Venice,

but the specified time has elapsed, and the Jew refuses to accept ten times the value of his debt. The newly married lady, who had secretly followed her husband disguised as a lawyer, arrives at this crisis at Venice, and causes it to be proclaimed that she came to resolve difficult legal questions. Being consulted on the case of Ansaldo, she decides, that the Jew is intitled to the pound of flesh, but that he shall be beheaded if he cuts more or less than a pound, or draws one drop of blood from his victim. The Jew relinquishes his claim, and Ansaldo is released. The disguised bride declines accepting any pecuniary recompence, but demands from Giannetto his wedding-ring, as a fee for the service she had rendered him. The lady takes her leave, and contrives to reach Belmont before her husband. On his arrival she receives him in her own character with coldness, and affects to believe that he had bestowed his ring upon some favoured mistress : he protests his innocence and relates the truth ; the lady perseveres in asserting that he had given the ring to a woman. At length Giannetto's grief at this imputation of falsehood penetrates the bosom of his wife ; she throws her arms about his neck, and explains the circumstances of her journey and disguise.

The similarity between the novel and the

play is striking. In both, the money engaged for by the bond is borrowed, not for the use of the borrower, but to enable a young man to obtain the hand of a wealthy lady resident at Belmont. The forfeiture of the same portion of flesh is stipulated on failure of payment, and the flesh, in both instances, is to be taken from what part of the merchant's body pleased the Jew*; who, in each case, is offered ten times the amount of his debt by the person for whom it was contracted. The bride, in both cases, arrives at Venice disguised as a lawyer, and interposes the same insurmountable obstacles to the exaction of the bloody penalty. Both the fair judges refuse pecuniary recompence; both request from the fingers of their husbands rings which they themselves had given to them, and the same species of *badinage* is the consequence of compliance when the ladies resume their own characters at Belmont.

The incident of the caskets, in the seventh scene of the second act, is borrowed from the

* On this point Shakspeare is at variance with himself: in Act I. sc. 3. Shylock stipulates for a pound of flesh,

“to be cut off and taken

In what part of your body pleaseth me.”

In Act IV. sc. 1. the bond confines the operation to the “breast,” “nearest his heart, those are the very words.”

English *Gesta Romanorum*, a collection of tales in the highest estimation with our story-loving ancestors. Three vessels were placed before the daughter of the king of Apulia for her choice, to prove whether she was worthy to receive the hand of the son of Anselmus, Emperor of Rome. The first was of pure gold, and filled with dead men's bones; on it was this inscription: *who chuses me shall find what he deserves*. The second was of silver, filled with earth, and thus inscribed: *who chuses me shall find what nature covets*. The third vessel was of lead, but filled with precious stones; it had this inscription: *who chuses me shall find what God hath placed*. The princess, after praying to God for assistance, preferred the leaden vessel. The Emperor informed her she had chosen as he wished, and immediately united her with his son.

The third plot in the drama, — the love of Jessica and Lorenzo, — bears a great resemblance to the fourteenth tale of *Massuccio di Salerno*, who flourished about 1470. In that tale we have an avaricious father, a daughter carefully shut up, her elopement with her lover by the intervention of a servant, her robbing her father of his money, and his grief on the discovery of his misfortunes; — his grief also is divided equally

between the loss of his daughter and the loss of his ducats.*

The widow at Belmont, Giannetto, Ansaldo, and the Jew in the Pecorone, are the prototypes of Portia, Bassanio, Antonio, and Shylock in the play. Portia resembles the lady in the novel, only in those particulars already noticed. She neither "ruins many gentlemen," nor, like her fair original, admits them to her bed under the delicate security of a sleeping potion skilfully and secretly administered. The scene of the caskets was wisely substituted for an incident which would have accorded ill with the character of a lady "of wond'rous virtues:"

" Nothing undervalued
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia."

In the novel, the improbability of a lady possessing so large a portion of legal acumen as the judgment on the Jew's case implies, is not disguised by any artifice. In the play, the objection is skilfully removed, by making Portia consult an eminent lawyer, Bellario, and act under his advice.

To cut a pound of flesh from the breast of a living fellow-creature, is a circumstance so abhorrent from the mind, that the strongest motives are necessary to give it the colour of credibility.

* See Dunlop's History of Fiction.

In the Pecorone, the Jew's reasons for his conduct are very unintelligible, but in the play, the defect is abundantly supplied. The rapacious cravings of senseless avarice, and the ferocious malignity of religious animosity, are causes adequate to the production of the most atrocious crimes. With consummate judgment, therefore, has Shakspeare ascribed Shylock's actions to this powerful combination of malignant passions, making their union the basis of that "lodged hate, and certain loathing" which he bears to the person of Antonio.* Avarice and religious animosity are the ruling passions of the monster's mind, the darling crimes of his black bosom, the sins which, thwarted in their indulgence, rouse and hurry into action with frightful energy and desperate inflexibility a spirit

" More fierce, and more inexorable far,
Than empty tigers, or the roaring sea."

Such are the actuating motives which render Shylock's ferocity natural, and his deafness to the strongest pleadings of nature credible.† Here is the answer to the enquiry, why, under the semblance of "a merry bond," did he treacherously entrap Antonio into his power?

* " I hate him, for he is a Christian ;

But more," &c. &c. (Act I. sc. 3.)

† " He hath disgraced me, and hindered me of half a million," &c. (Act III. sc. 1.)

and here, the avouchment for the truth of his asseveration, “ I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit, for were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will.”

Shylock is abhorred and execrated ; but the skill of the poet has endued him with qualities which preserve him from contempt. His fierceness, cruelty, and relentlessness are dignified by intellectual vigour. His actions are deliberate, they are the emanations of his bold and masculine understanding. Let the art with which he negotiates his bond be contemplated ; consider his coolness, his plausible exaggeration of the dangers to which Antonio's property is subjected ; his bitter sarcasms and insulting gibes ; all efforts of the mind to induce a belief of his indifference, and to disguise his real design : follow him into court, behold him maintaining his superiority in argument, unmoved by insult and unawed by power, till disappointment leaves him nothing to contend for, and anguish stops his speech, and then let his claims to intellectual distinction be decided on.

Fertile, and apparently inexhaustible, as were the powers of Shakspeare's own imagination, no presumptuous confidence in his facility of drawing on them, precluded him from gleaning such hints from other sources as were calculated to

contribute to the perfection of his Jewish portrait. In a work, called the "Orator," which was printed in 1596, and is a translation from the French of Alexander Silvayn, is the Declaration "of a Jew, who would for his debt have a pound of the flesh of a Christian," which appears to have suggested several hints for the conduct of Shylock before the court. "It is impossible," urges the Jew, "to break the credit of traffick amongst men without great detriment to the commonwealth." Thus Shylock :

" And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn
 To have the due and forfeit of my bond.
 If you deny it, *let the danger light*
 Upon your charter and your city's freedom." *

The Declaration of the Jew justifies his cruel exaction by the example set him of greater cruelties by Christians ; " as to bind all the body unto a most loathsome prison, or unto an intolerable slavery," Shylock resorts to the same argument :

" You have amongst you many a purchas'd slave."

* Shakspeare has a parallel passage in Act III. sc. 3,

" The duke cannot deny the course of law —
 For the commodity that strangers have
 With us in Venice, if it be denied,
 Will much impeach the justice of the state ;
 Since that the trade and profit of the city
 Consisteth of all nations."

The Jew is anxious, in his Declaration, to anticipate objections against the unreasonableness of his demand: "A man may ask why I would not rather take silver of this man, than his flesh." Shylock similarly anticipates the argument of his adversaries :

" You'll ask of me, why I rather choose to have
A weight of carrion flesh, than to receive
Three thousand ducats."

The Jew's rejoinder to his own question is substantially the same in the Declaration and in the play: "But I will only say, that by his obligation he oweth it me." *Declaration.*

" So do I answer you :
The pound of flesh which I demand of him,
Is dearly bought, is mine."

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

An old ballad, preserved in the *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, bearing every appearance of a date prior to that of Shakspeare's play, suggests the notion that from this source the poet caught the idea of Shylock's artful device for entrapping Antonio into the fatal bond* :

" No penny for the loan of it,
For one year you shall pay,

* Act I. sc. 3.

You may do me as good a turn
Before my dying day.

But we will have a *merry jest*,
For to be talked long :
You shall make me a bond, quoth he,
That shall be large and strong."

Here also might have been obtained Antonio's unanswerable plea in extenuation of his want of punctuality in the discharge of his obligation to the Jew :

" The merchant's ships were all at sea,
And money came not in."

Lastly, in the ballad is found that characteristic trait of the Jew's determination and cruelty, his preparation of the fatal instrument with which he was to perpetrate his crime :

" The bloody Jew, now ready is,
With whetted blade in hand,
To spoil the blood of innocent
By forfeit of his bond."

A more perfect contrast to the Jew could not have been framed than Antonio. He is open, candid, unsuspecting ; the purest spirit of friendship glows within his breast, and he freely dispenses his riches, and places his life in peril, for the benefit of him he loves, requiring no recommendation of Bassanio's enterprise to his pa-

tronage beyond the assurance of its strict conformity to the standard of integrity.* In the terrific hour, when he is about to fall a prey to the ferocity of a mortal enemy, his manly resignation is admirable. From first to last Antonio is the man who held "the world but as the world," and piously acknowledged, that all its strange mutations were "sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of heaven." This elegant, rather than brilliant portrait, is an expansion of the indulgent goodness and disinterested affection displayed by Ansaldo in the novel.

Gratiano and Launcelot are the only prominent characters which appear in the scenes of the Merchant of Venice that are not to be met with in the authorities already mentioned. Nor is Shakspeare's title even to these characters perfectly indisputable, since it is certain that a play on the same subject was exhibited long before our dramatist commenced his career.

* Act I. sc. 1. "I pray you, good Bassanio," &c. — Bassanio is guilty of detestable selfishness in suffering his friend to risk his life for him. As the story advances, Shakspeare has represented him in a more amiable light than the novelist has done: in the play no blame is imputable to the young bridegroom on account of the non-repayment of the money; but the novelist makes him dream away his life in love, utterly forgetful of honour.

The loss of this performance is justly a subject of regret, for as it combined within its plot the two incidents of the bond and the caskets*, it would, in all probability, have thrown much additional light on Shakspeare's progress in the composition of his highly finished comedy. At present we have no resource left but a reference to the novelists, who relate the stories which the plot of the Merchant of Venice combines; and the result of their comparison with the drama is, that Shakspeare directed his attention to the improvement of the materials before him, and imposed not on himself the labour of originating any thing entirely new. Gobbo and Gratiano seem exceptions to this remark. Both characters are unnecessary to the progress of the plot, and have every appearance of being introduced with a view to relief and variety, a practice so common with Shakspeare, that it is not unfair to assign Gobbo and Gratiano to him as his own. But the discovery of the old play may hereafter prove the fallacy of this conclusion.

* "The Jew shown at the Bull, representing the *greediness of worldly choosers*, and the *bloody minds of usurers*."

STEPHEN GOSSON'S SCHOOL OF ABUSE, 1579.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

 1599.

THE plot of this beautiful and romantic comedy was copied by Shakspeare from Lodge's *Rosalind, or Euphues' Golden Legacye*.

Sir John of Bourdeaux, a man of remarkable worth and wisdom, bequeathed to his eldest son, Saladyne, fourteen ploughlands, with all his manors, houses, and richest plate : unto his second son, Fernandyne, twelve ploughlands ; but unto Rosader, the youngest, he gave his horse, his armour, and his lance, with sixteen ploughlands ; for, if the inward qualities be indicated by exterior appearances, Rosader would, he thought, transcend his brothers in honour as he already did in comeliness. Saladyne was discontented with his father's distribution of property : both his brothers were under age ; he

was their guardian, and he resolved to appropriate their property to himself. Fernandyne was a scholar, and Saladyne determined to keep him at his studies, while he used his wealth. Rosader was to remain uneducated, for if he knew little, it was argued, he could execute but little, and though nature made him a gentleman, nurture would degrade him to a peasant: Saladyne employed him as his foot-boy. But the high-spirited Rosader spurned at the ignominious yoke, and manfully asserted his equality with his brother by nature, though he confessed his inferiority as a younger son. "Why," he demanded, "had Saladyne felled his woods and spoilt his manors." Saladyne ordered his men to chastise him. Rosader seized a rake and drove his brother from the garden, but desisted from injuring him on his soliciting peace and reconciliation.

The throne of France was at this time filled by Torismond, who had usurped the crown from his brother Gerismond, an outlaw in the forest of Arden. To divert the people from reflection on political matters, Torismond proclaimed a tournament and wrestling match. A Norman wrestler was to appear in the lists, and Saladyne bribed him to kill Rosader, whom he induced to assert the glory of Sir John of

Bourdeaux in chivalry. The festival took place, and the tournament was succeeded by the wrestling. Alinda, Torismond's daughter, and Rosalynd, the daughter of Gerismond, were present, with all the beauty of France. Rosader stepped into the lists where two young men had been already killed by the Norman champion. But Rosader noticed the company rather than the combatant, and fixed his eyes on Rosalynd till the Norman called his attention. The whole assembly wished Rosader the palm of victory. The encounter was fiercely and obstinately contested: the gold of Saladyne prompted the exertions of the Norman, while the affectionate glances of Rosalynd were a no less powerful stimulus to Rosader. The Norman at length was thrown. High were the compliments bestowed upon the victor, and particularly when he was known to be the youngest son of Sir John of Bourdeaux. Rosalynd thought of love as of a toy, and feared not to dally with the flame: she took a jewel from her neck and sent it by a page to Rosader.

Rosader returned to the house of Saladyne accompanied by some friends, but his brother refusing to admit them, Rosader entered by force, and found in the hall only Adam Spencer, an Englishman, an old and trusty servant

of Sir John, and always the friend of Rosader. By the mediation of Adam, Saladyne and Rosader are again reconciled.

Torismond observing the general love and favour with which Rosalynd was regarded, banished her from his court. Alinda remonstrated, and sentence of banishment was then passed on both. The cousins resolved to travel together, and as they were without a male companion, Rosalynd, the tallest, dressed herself as a page, boasting that she would play the man to admiration, she would carry a rapier, and if any knave offered Alinda wrong, he should feel the point of her weapon. They changed their names into Ganimede and Aliena, and set forth. A few days brought them to the forest of Arden, where they purchased a cottage of the shepherd Coridon: they there also encountered another shepherd, Montanus, who amused them by his sincere but fruitless courtship of the affections of a country coquette named Phœbe.

In the meanwhile, Saladyne's hatred of Rosader burst out afresh. He seized and tied him to a post in the hall, forbidding his servants to give him either meat or drink: but he was fed and released by Adam Spencer. The old man restrained Rosader's thoughts of revenge, and advised him still to appear bound, and wait till

the morrow, when his brother was to give a noble entertainment to his friends, on purpose to scoff at Rosader's helplessness. The feast was held, Rosader was pointed at as a lunatick, and the guests were regardless of his remonstrances. Rosader then took a signal from Adam, brake his bonds, seized a poleaxe, and used it with such ability, that he drove all the guests from the house. Saladyne summoned the sheriff to his aid; but Rosader overcame all who opposed him. He left the house, however, soon afterwards, dreading the vengeance of the law, and fled to Arden, accompanied by Adam. They chanced on a path that led into the thickest of the forest, and they were in danger of perishing from hunger.

Rosader was on the point of yielding to despair, when the offer of Adam to open his veins, and save his master's life by the sacrifice of his own, suddenly roused him to exertion. Rosader scoured the forest in search of game, and accidentally arrived at the spot where Gerismond was celebrating his birth-day by a feast which he gave to his companions in exile. Rosader saluted them graciously, entreating food, and was answered kindly by Gerismond. Rosader quitted the party, and returned with Adam on his back: he then related his own

tale of misfortune, and added the circumstances of the banishment of Rosalynd and Alinda. The violence of Torismond did not stop here:—he first imprisoned, and then banished Saladyne, on pretence of the injuries he had done his brother Rosader, but, in reality, to possess himself of his estate. Saladyne wandered to the forest of Arden; fruit and berries were his only food; and he was on the eve of falling a prey to a hungry lioness, when his injured brother Rosader saved him by killing the animal. The brothers were reconciled; and the repentant Saladyne, shortly afterwards, rescued Alinda from the hands of ruffians. He fell in love with her himself, and was rewarded for his generous valour by the return of her affection.

Rosader had not yet learnt by absence, to forget the beauty whose applauding smiles had stimulated, and whose gift of a jewel from her neck had intelligibly expressed her admiration of his bravery. He wandered through the wilds of Arden sighing the name of Rosalynd, and cutting verses in her praise on trees. The cousins met him, and, under favour of their disguises, conversed with him on the subject of his passion. In due time, it appeared, that Ganymede, the page, was no other than Rosalynd

herself: she was restored to her father and united to Rosader.

Powerfully aided by the peers of France, the dethroned king fought and overcame his usurping brother Torismond, and Gerismond was reinstated on his throne.

This story is told by Lodge with prolixity the most exhausting, and pedantry and conceit perfectly insufferable. The style is stilted and inflated; the thoughts unnatural, and the sentiments affected. With a depravity of taste common to the age in which he lived, he thought more of the display of his own learning than of beauty and simplicity in the style of his narrative, and his ladies quote Latin with the glibness of pedagogues.

Such was the work selected by Shakspeare for the foundation of *As You Like It*; and the use he made of it demonstrates both the force of his genius and the delicacy of his taste. He seized the romantic character of a tale in which nobles lived, “like the old Robin Hood of England, and flouted the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world* ;” he embellished it with all the bewitching graces of his own poetic pen, and enriched it with the high-toned observations

* Act I. sc. 1.

of his masculine understanding. Some few thoughts and expressions he adopted from Lodge into the dialogue and songs of his drama ; but he entirely discarded the hyperbolical cast of feeling and taffeta phrases that pervade the novel, and substituted in their stead a strain of poetry and sentiment beautifully romantic and harmonious.

Gerismond the rightful, and Torismond the usurping, kings of France, are produced by Shakspeare under the titles of the exiled duke, and duke Frederic, his brother. The dramatist preserved Rosalynd as the name of the daughter of the former, and called the child of the latter Celia, instead of Alinda. Ganymede and Aliena are the names adopted by the ladies when they retire to the forest of Arden, both in the novel and in the play.

Saladyne, Fernandyne, and Rosader, the heirs of Sir John of Bourdeaux, appear in *As You Like It*, as Oliver, Jaques, and Orlando, the sons of Sir Rowland de Bois. In the distribution of their father's property, Shakspeare deviates entirely from the novelist ; he permits not Sir Rowland de Bois to recognise, in his bequests, the superior qualities of his youngest son, but gives to Orlando only " a poor thousand crowns," and the benefit of a charge to Oliver

to breed Orlando well.* But in the play, as well as in the novel, the elder brother first determines to defraud the younger. He afterwards seeks his life, and the latter finds safety in flight to the forest of Arden. While Shakspeare rejected as undramatic, and derogatory from the character of his hero, the confinement of Rosader to a post in his brother's hall, where he was exposed to scorn and ridicule, the dramatist was not insensible to the eye of favour with which superior personal courage and prowess are universally regarded; and he is studious in the display of Orlando's hard-earned victory over Charles the wrestler. But Shakspeare knew full well the qualities in which real pre-eminence of character consisted, and he bestowed them on Orlando.

How interesting does he appear even in the description of the envious Oliver himself?

“ My soul, I know not why, hates nothing more than he. Yet he's gentle; never school'd, and yet learned; full of noble device; of all sorts enchantingly beloved; and, indeed, so much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether misprised.” †

How feeling and just are the repinings of

* Act I. sc. 1.

† Act I. sc. 1.

Orlando at the degradation of his breeding, and with what true nobility of spirit asserts he his claim to the dignity of a gentleman — his birth-right as the son of Sir Rowland de Bois! How amiable is his solicitude for the fainting Adam, and how tender his attentions! and with what beauty has Shakspeare substituted for the offer of Rosader to fight with any of the foresters in proof of his valour, a pathetic appeal from Orlando to the duke :

“ If ever you have look'd on better days ;
 If ever been where bells have knoll'd to church ;
 If ever sat at any good man's feast ;
 If ever from your eye-lids wip'd a tear,
 And know what 'tis to pity and be pitied ;
 Let gentleness my strong enforcement be :” *

Of the verses distributed by Orlando through the forest, the Fool very pertinently remarks that he could rhyme “so, eight years together; dinners, and suppers, and sleeping hours excepted†,” but the purity and ardour of the flame that burnt in the bosom of Orlando, are, nevertheless, strongly and interestingly pourtrayed.

Rosalynd in the novel, and Rosalind in the play, are banished from their uncle's court, on account of the universal pity with which they were regarded. In similar coincidences of circum-

* Act II. sc. 7.

† Act III. sc. 2.

stances the two characters abound, but the mental qualities of Lodge's heroine will bear no comparison with those of Shakspeare's quick-witted and animated Rosalind. With a heart of exquisite sensibility, she combines a buoyancy of spirit, bidding defiance to the vicissitudes of fortune. Her father is deposed; she is herself driven into exile from her uncle's court, and at the same time entangled in all the perplexities of love; yet she ever "shows more mirth than she is mistress of*," and her wit gambols, in playful delicacy, or well-pointed satire, through all subjects as they rise. The incident of the lover wooing his mistress, who is disguised, merely as the representative of his beloved, is managed by the dramatist with infinite address. It wears not even the appearance of improbability, so playful is the form in which Rosalind makes the proposition to Orlando. And in respect to what is natural, can any thing be more perfectly so than that a love-sick maid should avail herself of the habit of a page, in which she was unknown, to receive a homage most acceptable to her heart — the protestations of an impassioned lover?

Far unequal to the brilliancy of Rosalind's portrait is that of Celia. But Shakspeare made

* Act I. sc. 2.

large amends for the partial neglect with which he treated Lodge's Alinda by the beautiful trait of disinterested affection which he assigns to her representative. Celia follows her cousin into exile from the pure suggestions of attachment :

—————" the Duke

Hath banish'd me his daughter.

Rosal.

That he hath not.

Cel. No ? hath not ? Rosalind lacks then the love
Which teacheth thee that thou and I am one ?
No ; let my father seek another heir."

* * * *

—————" we still have slept together ;

Rose at an instant, learn'd, play'd, eat together ;

And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans,

Still we went coupled and inseparable."*

Alinda, as well as her cousin Rosalynd, is driven into exile by the usurper Torismond.

It was perfectly in accordance with nature, that the laurels which encircled the brow of the heroic Rosader, should prove fatal to the peace of the susceptible heart of Rosalynd ; and even a more powerful plea for Aliena's love of the once cruel and sanguinary Saladyne was provided by the novelist. Saladyne rescued Aliena from the apparent danger of violation. Shakspeare rejected this incident ; and the attachment of the princess to Oliver, was thus left open to the roguish witticism of Rosalind : —

“ There was never any thing so sudden, but the fight of two rams, and Cæsar’s thrasonical brag of — *I came, saw, and overcame.*”*

Oliver, like Saladyne, hates, and cruelly persecutes his youngest brother; like Saladyne he is himself banished; and is subdued like Saladyne, by an act of heroism and generosity, to acknowledge his inferiority to one whom he had hitherto regarded with feelings of envy and detestation. The idea of Shakspeare’s exquisite picture of the scene was caught from Lodge’s novel, but its high poetic colouring is the glory of the dramatist:

“ Under an old oak, who boughs were moss’d with age,
And high top bald with dry antiquity,
A wretched ragged man, o’ergrown with hair,
Lay sleeping on his back.” †

These lines are substituted for “ Saladyne, wearie with wandring up and downe, and hungry with long fasting, finding a little cave by the side of a thicket, eating such fruite as the forest did affoord, and contenting himself with such drinke as nature had provided, and thirst made delicate, after his repast fell into a dead sleepe.” For the following picturesque

* Act V. sc. 2.

† Act IV. sc. 3.

and graceful verses, Shakspeare was indebted to his own poetic feeling and imagination only, for of the serpent there is no mention in the novel :

“ About his neck

A green and gilded snake had wreath'd itself,
 Who with her head, nimble in threats, approach'd
 The opening of his mouth; but suddenly
 Seeing Orlando, it unlink'd itself,
 And with indented glides did slip away
 Into a bush :”

Of the other characters in the play Sylvius is met with in the novel under the name of Montanus, who, like Shakspeare's swain, perseveringly courts Phœbe in despite of the professed antipathy of the perverse vixen.

In finally disposing of his dramatic personages the poet unjustly neglected the aged and faithful Adam, in whom so well appears

“ The constant service of the antique world,
 When service sweat for duty, not for meed !”*

The novel rewarded the good man's fidelity by placing him in the honourable situation of captain of the guard to the restored monarch, Gerismond.

Touchstone, Audrey, and Jaques originated in Shakspeare's own imagination.

* Act II. sc. 3.

As You Like It, is the earliest play of the bard's, in which he introduced the character of "a motley fool." In the essay on the early theatres the prominence of the vice in mysteries and moralities was remarked on, and the clown pointed out as his successor. Shakspeare severely censured these privileged buffoons*, and many low characters probably found a place in his dramas to take away all plea for the appearance in them of the extemporary clown. His fools, in particular, must be regarded in that light, and they might well have been received as adequate substitutes for their disgusting predecessors. Shakspeare's fools are representatives of the hireling fools once common in the domestic establishments of our wealthy ancestors. Their business was to furnish the family with amusement in a variety of ways: their dialogues abounded in jests, songs, and stories. They had, as Jaques says of them, "strange places cramm'd with observation," the which they vented "in mingled forms†;" and they "used their folly like a stalking-horse, and, under the presentation of that, shot wit‡;" for they had "as large a charter as the wind,

* Hamlet. Act III. sc. 2. † Act II. sc. 7.

‡ Act V. sc. 4.

to blow on whom they pleased ;” and they that were most galled with their folly found the obligation strongest on them to laugh :

“ And why, sir, must they so ?

The *why* is plain as way to parish church :

He, that a fool doth very wisely hit,

Doth very foolishly, although he smart,

Not to seem senseless of the bob : if not

The wise man’s folly is anatomiz’d

Even by the squandring glances of the fool.” *

A domestic fool of this character is Touchstone, in the present play, and the fool both in *Twelfth Night*, and in *All’s Well that Ends Well*. The fool in *Lear* is subservient to higher purposes : his comments and reflections on the folly of the unhappy king are inimitably just, and, though the comparison may carry with it something of the ludicrous, he by no means inefficiently performs the office of the chorus in classic tragedy.

Jaques, the melancholy-loving Jaquest, is broadly distinguished from the common misanthrope, who, disclaiming the sympathies of humanity, in pride or in revenge, mocks at the misfortunes, and rails at the pursuits of his fellow-creatures ; for the disposition of Jaques is amiable, gentle, and humane. He regards

* Act II. sc. 7.

† Act II. sc. 5. Act IV. sc. 1.

the world, indeed, with a jaundiced and discontented eye; he depreciates its pleasures, and undervalues its occupations, for he deduced the emptiness of both from his experience. He had been, it appears, a libertine*, but his powerful and highly-cultivated mind revolted at slavery to his passions: the frivolity and monotony of dissipation disgusted him, and his high-toned moral principles triumphed over the grossness of sensual indulgence. The only legitimate pursuit of life, he found to be virtue; and the truth which he deeply felt, he studiously inculcates: it is the moral his sententious wisdom teaches; it is the weighty “matter †” of his sullen or melancholy musings; which, whether capriciously intruded, or naturally arising out of the passing incident, are at all times welcome and effective.

There is weight and dignity about the play of *As You Like It*, altogether unusual in comedy, for which it appears principally indebted to the presence of the moralising Jaques, whose character is not only conceived with felicity, but is, throughout, supported with vigour, and managed with inimitable tact. It may be partly accounted for on the principle of contrast, that the sombre reflections of Jaques heighten, rather than detract

* Act II. sc. 7.

† Act II. sc. 1.

from, the effect of the high-wrought comedy of the play. But the cause of a result so unexpected, from a combination so unusual, lays somewhat more remote. It is to be found in that perfect harmony which the genius of Shakspeare established between the two distinct features of his subject. Had Jaques taken a saturnine view of the vices and follies of mankind, the spirit of comedy would have been damped by the gloom of his misanthropy. But the better feelings of humanity predominate in his bosom, and he never gives utterance to a sentiment which loses not its asperity in the dry humour or good-natured badinage which accompanies it. Nor is even the romantic character of this beautiful drama injured by the introduction of the sententious sage. With equal taste and judgment it is provided, that the deep recesses of the forest, and the

“—— oak, whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along the wood,”

should be the scenes whence Jaques inculcated his lessons of philosophy and morality.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

 1600.

THE principal incident of this comedy of wit and taste, may be traced to a period as early as the date of the Spanish romance, *Tirante the White*, composed in the dialect of Catalonia, about the year 1400. In the fifth canto of the *Orlando Furioso*, the same story is also to be found; and from that poem it was copied by the Italian novelist, *Bandello*, who made it the subject of the twenty-second fable of the first part of his work.

Fenicia, the daughter of Lionato, a gentleman of Messina, is betrothed to Timbreo de Cardona. Girondo, a disappointed lover of the young lady, resolves, if possible, to prevent the marriage. He insinuates to Timbreo that his mistress is disloyal, and offers to show him a stranger scaling her chamber window. Timbreo accepts the invitation, and witnesses the hired

servant of Girondo, in the dress of a gentleman, ascending a ladder, and entering the house of Lionato. Stung with rage and jealousy, Timbreo, the next morning, accuses his innocent mistress to her father, and rejects the alliance. Fenicia sinks into a swoon; a dangerous illness succeeds, and to stifle all reports injurious to her fame, Lionato proclaims that she is dead. Her funeral rights are performed in Messina, while in truth she lies concealed in the obscurity of a country residence.

The thought of having occasioned the death of an innocent and lovely female, strikes Girondo with horror: in the agony of remorse, he confesses his villainy to Timbreo, and they both throw themselves on the mercy, and ask forgiveness, of the insulted family of Fenicia. On Timbreo is imposed only the penance of espousing a lady, whose face he should not see previous to his marriage: instead of a new bride, whom he expected, he is presented, at the nuptial altar, with his injured and beloved Fenicia.

Such is the story of *Bandello*, which probably reached Shakspeare, through the medium of the *Cent Histoires Tragiques*, a compilation from tragical writers, published by Belleforest in 1583, and translated into English shortly afterwards.

The place in which the scene is laid; the name

of the father of the heroine ; the entire scope and bearing of the story ; and many more minute particulars are palpable coincidences between the novel and the play. Shakspeare's deviations from the narrative are curious, and all are not easily capable of vindication.

Disappointed love, in the novel, forms an intelligible motive for the treacherous treatment of the heroine ; but in the play, Don John's hatred of Claudio, without any apparent cause beyond the indulgence of a saturnine disposition, is surely inadequate to the production of a design, so base and cruel as that which is practised upon Hero.

Shakspeare again deviates from the novel, when he desires to excite jealousy in Claudio, who witnesses an amorous conversation between Borachio and the waiting-woman of Hero, disguised in the clothes of her mistress ; Borachio addressing Margaret throughout, by the name of Hero. Probability is violated in this case, for as Claudio is supposed to be near enough to hear distinctly the dialogue contrived for his deception, he must have been stupid beyond all calculation not to have discovered, that the pretended lady, neither in voice nor person, resembled Hero.

The story is brought to a happy termination in the novel, by the repentance of the guilty

Girondo. Shakspeare, on the contrary, makes his villain Don John, fly from Messina, and his guilt is brought to light by two watchmen, who overhear the drunken garrulity of Borachio. Happy for the drama is this deviation, for it has been the means of enriching the stage with Dogberry and Verges. In delineating these worthies, Shakspeare may have outdone the life, but who regrets that he wantons in the abundance of his humour?

But it is neither in the management of the plot, which he derived from the Italian novelist, nor in the delineation of its necessary characters, that the merit of this elegant comedy is comprized. Benedick and Beatrice constitute its real claim to admiration. Scarcely in any way connected with the main incident, and in no shape existing in the original, they form the peculiar charm of the play. They are alike in disposition and mind, and that very similarity is ingeniously made the foundation of an avowed hostility between them, which expresses itself in agreeable, yet pointed raillery. Benedick is endowed with every accomplishment that becomes a gentleman, “of a noble strain, of approved valour, and confirmed honesty;” and his courteous qualities are graced by wit, which is remarkable for its promptitude, brilliancy, and good-nature, per-

petually playing upon an imaginary dislike to matrimony.

Beatrice is delineated in a style spirited and entertaining. She is happy in the possession of an amiable temper; and the essence of her mental character is wit, which, like Benedick, she directs with peculiar felicity against love and marriage.

In the gaiety of his fancy, Shakspeare resolved to reconcile and to marry these wit-combatants. He has made each anxious for the favourable opinion of the other, though they are apparently foes: thus Benedick is piqued at being called the prince's jester, and Beatrice's vanity is wounded at being reproached for taking her wit from the hundred merry tales. Each party dreaded the other's scorn; but when Benedick believed that Beatrice loved him, all fear of raillery ceased; his self-opinion was flattered, and we are prepared to find him returning her supposed passion; for he had already avowed that "if she were not possessed by a fury, she exceeded Hero as much in beauty, as the first of May does the last of December." The whole of Benedick's soliloquy, as he falls into the snare that is laid for him, is a fine satire on the mutability of opinion, and an admirable specimen of that specious mode of argument by which we

reconcile to our judgments the suggestions of self-love.

The management of Beatrice is equally happy. She loved, because she thought that another loved her, — a beautiful illustration of a general truth: she was a generous feeling woman, and needed no cold sophistry to satisfy the pride of intellect, before she yielded up her heart.

Shakspeare has been deservedly praised for his skill in overcoming the difficulties that still interposed between the union of Benédick and Beatrice. Delay was impossible; the story of Benedick's love being a fable, great care was necessary to prevent Beatrice from discovering the deception practised on her; a discovery which would have altogether defeated the design of bringing her and Benedick together, for Beatrice never could have condescended to own a passion she had been tricked into. Shakspeare, therefore, combines in her mind, a desire of revenge on Claudio with her new feelings for Benedick. In the most natural way possible, she engages her lover to call Claudio to account for the injury done her cousin; and she is thus at once compelled to drop her capricious humour, and treat Benedick with the confidence and candour his service merited.

Benedick and Beatrice are the pure and beautiful productions of Shakspeare's imagination. He first conceived and gave a faint sketch of their characters in *Love's Labour's Lost*. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, they are expanded into finished portraits, and launched into a new scene of action of which he himself was the entire inventor. It is not often that Shakspeare appears as the constructor of his dramatic incidents. The plot on the two marriage haters is ingeniously conceived and executed; and the characters of the parties being as similar as is consistent with the difference of sex, the practice of the same mode of deception on each of them is highly natural and humorous.

NOTES.

NOTE A.

MR. Luder, in his Essay on the Character of Henry, is eminently successful in exposing the exaggeration with which successive historians have *adorned* their portraits of the prince. But, in truth, after stripping the tale of all its meretricious colouring, enough remains in the report of Elmham, Henry's original biographer, to justify the idea of his having been a *Corinthian* of the highest order — "He was much given to lasciviousness, and very fond of musical instruments. Passing the bounds of modesty, and burning with the fire of youth, he was eager in the pursuit of Venus as of Mars. When not engaged in military exercises, he also indulged in other excesses which unrestrained youth is apt to fall into." The truth of this picture cannot be shaken by the omission of some circumstances in Henry's life which Elmham ought to have recorded, or by the misrepresentation of others on which he should have been informed more correctly. Such failings are common to all historians; but Elmham, the contemporary of Henry and his father, and who survived both, could

not erroneously have made an allegation against the prince of excessive and habitual indulgence in the vices of youth. At the same time, I perfectly agree with Mr. Luder, that if, in the spring of life, "the feathers of the prince's crest played wantonly over his brow, we are not obliged to add ungracefully." But I cannot acquiesce in the opinion, that the historians borrowed from the theatre the idea that the prince's associates were low and degrading. Shakspeare's influence over the historians is entirely out of the question, for he wrote his play after Holinshed and Stowe's works were published. In the supposition that the mischief was produced by "The Famous Victories," the fact is assumed that it was in existence previous to 1573, when Holinshed's Chronicle was printed. Of this there is no proof, and the probabilities appear to me against it. The old play is proved to have existed in 1588; because Tarlton the actor, who was much admired in the clown's part, died in that year. But its date must be carried at least fifteen years higher, before it will yield any support to the hypothesis of Mr. Luder. Internal evidence there is none; conjecture is as available on one side as the other; and the same objection may, perhaps, be urged against the opinion that the probability is greater of the dramatists having copied from the historians, than the historians from the dramatists.

NOTE B.

THE tradition preserved by Rowe of the part of Falstaff having been originally written under the name of Oldcastle, has given rise to many pages of edifying notes by the commentators, which those will do well to read who deem more information necessary than they will find here on a question so immaterial. Sir John Oldcastle is one of Henry the Fifth's dissolute companions in the anonymous play; and the following line still stands in the First Part of Henry the Fourth, "As the honey of Hybla, *my old lad of the castle.*" Contemporary writers speak of Falstaff as standing in the shoes of Oldcastle, which some critics say is clear proof that Shakspeare substituted the former name for the latter; whilst others assert the legitimate inference to be no more than that Shakspeare's Falstaff had superseded the old buffoon character of Oldcastle in the anonymous play. The Epilogue to the Second Part of Henry the Fourth disclaims the supposition that the dramatic Falstaff is a satire upon the real Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, who died a martyr: no two characters were in fact ever more different; and the objection could never have been raised, without the idea had been suggested by some such leading feature as a similarity of names. Coupling this argument with facts of the still extant punning line in Henry the Fourth, and the occurrence of the name of Oldcastle in "The Famous Victories," I cannot but think that the tradition of Rowe represents the truth.

NOTE C.

I TRANSFER this play without hesitation from 1594, where it is placed by Malone on very insufficient grounds, to 1597. Shakspeare's obligations to the "Orator" prove the composition of the play to have been subsequent to 1596, and its mention by Meres, that it was previous to 1598. By the present arrangement two plays are assigned to 1597, and two to 1594. Malone gave three plays to 1594, and one to 1597.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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